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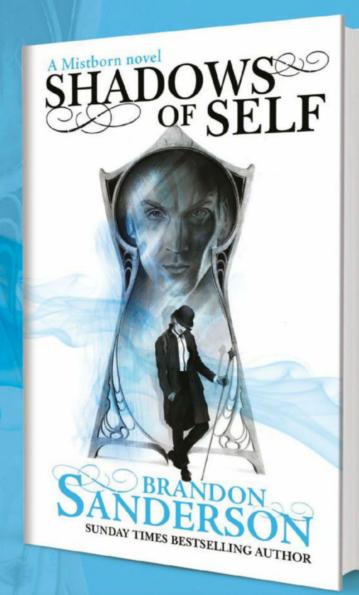




'Dan Abnett is probably the best writer of dark military SF in the world.' - The Guardian

IN THE DISTANT FUTURE, MANKIND'S FRACTURED EMPIRE IS BESET BY AN ALIEN INVASION OF IMMENSE PROPORTIONS. SAVAGE, GREEN-SKINNED ORKS, LED BY A CREATURE KNOWN ONLY AS "THE BEAST", ARE EVERYWHERE, AND ONLY THE SPACE MARINES, GENETICALLY ENGINEERED SUPER SOLDIERS, CAN STAND AGAINST THEM...

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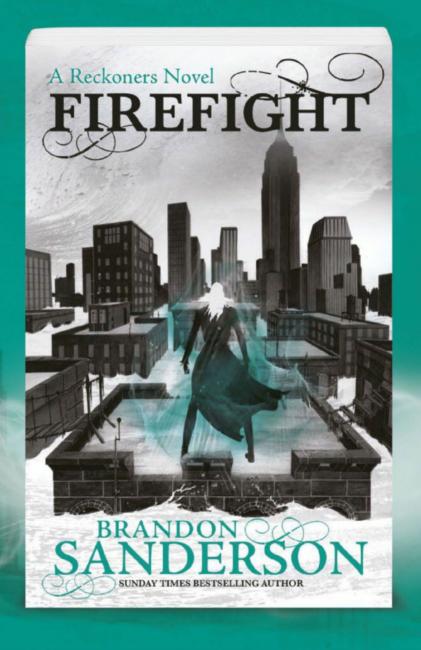
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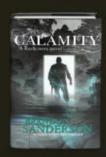
Scholar of Greek Ian Berriman on '80s animation Ulysses 31.

## VENGEANCE IS COMING



The second book in the stunning Reckoners series from the Sunday Times bestselling author





Coming February 2016





#### Rants & Raves

#### RICHARD EDWARDS

#### HIGHLIGHTS

> The Martian wa return to form for Ridley Scott, the wonderful Ant-Mar

made Age Of Ultron look a bloated mess, and Mad Max: Fury Road redefined what an action movie can be On TV 2015 has seen The Walking Dead's best run for ages, and Daredevil was magnificent. LOWLIGHTS

> Terminator Genisys. Please stop.

#### NICK SETCHFIELD

#### HIGHLIGHTS

My heart belongs to spy-fi so I was rovally entertained The Man From

UNCLE. Also, Ant-Man was incredibly funny, and on TV Agent Carter was a retrotastic treat

> Fantastic Four. My fave comic book so I took this abominatio like a personal insult.

#### IAN BERRIMAN NTERTAINMENT

#### HIGHLIGHTS

my favourite film of the year, while on TV I loved

Humans, Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell, Wayward Pines and The

LOWLIGHTS

The finale of Falling Skies was a real damp squib.

#### JORDAN FARLEY EDITOR COMMUNI



Road, Ilsa Faust in
Mission: Impossible and Thorn in Half The World. I adored Daredevil and The Flash. And Fallout 4 is the best thing ever LOWLIGHTS

Fantastic Four. Never seen a film derail quite so catastrophically.

#### RUSSELL LEWIN UCTION EDITOR



People on social media closing down freely expressed opinions seems to be ever-increasing.

#### JONATHAN COATES



that Day of the



Dead opening sequence. Thought Jurassic World was an entertaining return to form for the series, Mad Max was a feast for the eyes, and Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation was an incredible thrill ride. LOWLIGHTS

Fantastic Four and Terminator

#### CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK DEPUTY ART EDITOR HIGHLIGHTS

Jurassic World was a welcome return, not least because of leading man Chris Pratt, and

thank goodness for *Ant-Man*– finally a Marvel film that didn't take itself too seriously LOWLIGHTS

Heroes Reborn, they really should have left this show alone

#### ADRIAN HILL

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Getting to see the Star Wars Diego last July left a lump in my throat. On TV, The Walking Dead continues to be amazing and SPECTRE was a great rollercoaster of a 007 movie. Still Star Wars to come LOWLIGHTS

The Poltergeist remake. Why



on earth did they bother?

#### MIKE BRENNAN

HIGHLIGHTS made me think Ant-Man would be a stinker, but great casting in Paul Rudd and the right mix of humour and action made for the best superhero movie of 2015! LOWLIGHTS

How hard is it to get the Fantastic Four right?! The film got worse the longer it went on

#### MEGAN DAVIS ART EDITOR



LOWLIGHTS

I was so looking forward to Fantastic Four. Needless to say I was a little disappointed.



as 2015 been the most exciting year for scifi and fantasy ever? we always .....
going to be massive – a couple of Marvel fi and fantasy ever? We always knew it was movies, a Mad Max, a 007, a Hunger Games, a Jurassic World and Sir Terry Pratchett's final Discworld novel made sure scale was never going to be a problem – but it's been the quality that's been the happy surprise. I've lost count of the number of times that a movie or TV show has left me with a big grin on my face – and we haven't even seen The Force Awakens yet...

The SFX team have picked their highlights of 2015 on the left there, but this issue our great, big eye of Sauron is trained on the 12 months ahead. In our Massive 2016 Preview (p53), we've picked out the essential TV shows, movies, books and comics that will define your year. Along the way we speak with X-Files creator Chris Carter, Agent Carter star Hayley Atwell, Red Dwarf co-creator Doug Naylor, Captain America himself, Chris Evans, and many more, to give vou the key intel on the sci-fi and fantasy that matters.

To make sure you don't miss any big genre action this year, make sure you subscribe to SFX, and get every issue delivered to your door. See p30 for details.

And, most importantly, have a wonderful Christmas and New Year, with plenty of food, fun and (we hope) a memorable *Doctor Who* festive special – Steven Moffat and Peter Capaldi give us some hints of what to expect on p44.





Richard Edwards, Editor @RichDEdwards

RICH'S PICTURE BY OLLY CURTIS, KOBAL (1)



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#### MASTER RACE

→ America is occupied by an invading alien force in Colony.

#### Highlights 🔮



**KEEP ON** TREKKIN'

→ The stuff we want to know about the new Star Trek TV show.



THE NEIL DEAL

→ Neil Gaiman talks American Gods and Fortunately, The Milk.

## Red Alert Get sci-fi news, reviews and features at gamesradar.com/sfx

SCI-FACT! The original Beowulf poem can be found in the Nowell Codex, an ancient manuscript that is held in the British Library.

66 The idea is that everyone has a secret, or can be seen from a different angle 99

world from scratch. There's a working ecology to the animals and a sense of history that will come out as the series progresses."

Believed to have been written some time between the 8th and 11th centuries by an unknown author of Geatish (North Germanic) origin, Beowulf is arguably best known nowadays as one of the inspirations for Tolkien's The Lord Of The Rings novels. Fittingly, Peter Jackson's films were one of Dormer's crucial touchstones when it came to bringing Beowulf to life.

"This is something that I never believed would happen," he admits. "I was writing epic stuff and they were telling me, 'It will be epic!' and I was like, 'Oh, okay.' Then I saw a little model that our production designer Grant Montgomery had built of the set, which looked nice, but you couldn't really imagine it until you see the set itself, which is humongous. As each element came on board, from the sets to the cast, we ended up adapting the scripts as it made us feel like we had to raise the bar."

#### **FAMILY VALUES**

Just as The Walking Dead show uses the comic as a springboard for its plotlines, there will still be much to appreciate for anyone familiar with the original text. "The story that we've got planned stays true to the basic structure of the poem, but it plays out over a larger canvas," says Dormer. "We play around with your expectations of the story, as we wanted to find a way of telling it so that people who already know the story will still be able to find something in it for them. But we also live in a different age, so our worries and concerns are slightly different, and in some ways more complex. We're out to entertain people but it's like Star Trek, where there's some underlying stuff that just gives it a real texture in the sense of the reality of the place."

Beginning with Beowulf returning from exile to his homeland of Herot after the death of his father Hrothgar (William Hurt), the story emphasises his stormy relationship with his half-brother Sleen (Ed Speleers) who is furious that his mother Rheda (Joanne Whalley) has been appointed the new Thane and not himself. "Most stories that have longevity are about those universal things that we all relate to, such as the tension between parents and their children," says Kieran Bew, who plays the bearded warrior. "With Beowulf



and Sleen, there's a huge rivalry and animosity between them, and we talked about that as performers, as Ed's character is motivated by loss and jealousy and a need to be accepted by his father. Even though Beowulf is Hrothgar's illegitimate son, his father accepted him, but in turn, Beowulf also wants to be accepted by Sleen. All that hostility then becomes quite difficult, which is where our show starts."

Insisting that he "doesn't want to get all Shakespearean," Dormer compares the role that Hrothgar plays in the frequent flashbacks to the ghost of the Prince of Denmark's own father in Hamlet. "He's dead when we arrive but his presence lingers over the whole of this season, and is played out in the final episode," he teases, revealing that Beowulf himself also has something to hide. "In the first episode, we concentrate on the fact that Beowulf has come back and he has this secret, and we will see how that plays out. But the idea is that everyone has a secret, or can be seen from a different angle. As the story progresses, we'll see all of that, as everyone has their own surprises."

Beowulf airs on ITV in early 2016.





## Red Alert



#### SHIELDLANDS A TO Z

**Exploring Beowulf's kingdom** 

#### **GO WEST**

> The Shieldlands of the title refers to the mythical kingdom as a whole, which includes territory populated by the Mudborn and other creatures such as the Giants and Trolls that has since been conquered by humans. "As a kid, I read Dee Brown's Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee, which was all about what happened to the Native Americans, and that all fed into it," says Dormer. "As time goes on, you start to feel a bit more sympathy for the Mudborn, and realise that they also have a point to what they're doing."

#### **MULTICULTURAL MELTING POT**

→ With the families of characters like young blacksmith Vishka (Ellora Torchia) hailing from the distant Farlands. Herot and the surrounding communities are made up of a number of different races. "We also have David Aiala, who is British of Nigerian origin. He plays Rate, one of the other Thanes, who is head of the Varni, who are a nomadic war tribe," says Dormer. "We also have characters like Varr (Edward Hogg), who is this slightly odd, maître d' figure, who was raised amongst the Varni, although he hates the violence. We've created a world, and then we've played with it."



#### TRULY FANTASTIC BEASTS

→ Having previously overseen Walking With Dinosaurs and Primeval, executive producer Tim Haines has ensured that the show's fantastical creatures look authentic as well as spectacular. "An example of that is the Trolls," says Dormer. "Because we have them no longer eating meat, they have to be given salt by the humans, which keeps them sedated and means they're controllable. But later on when someone starts playing around with that, they start to get a bit dangerous...

#### FROM SOAP TO SHIELDLANDS

Cropping up later in the series is Ian Puleston-Davies, best known as Owen Armstrong on Coronation Street. "As the story progresses, there comes a time when Rheda has to win a vote from the other Thanes to become the Jarl, the ruler of the whole of the Shieldlands," says Dormer. "lan's character Lagrathorn is the Thane of Banning, and he's always had a place in his heart for Rheda, and he's a bit of a drunk and a lecher. There was great chemistry between him and Joanne Whalley, so we kept wanting to bring him back.'



The Mortal Instruments franchise is getting a second lease of screen life with Shadowhunters. Based on the popular novels by Cassandra Clare, the TV series follows Clary, an 18-year-old art student who discovers she comes from a long line of half-human/half-angel warriors dedicated to hunting down demons. When her mother goes missing, Clary must embrace her magical heritage in order to survive.

To avoid simply rehashing the books and 2013's The Mortal Instruments: City Of Bones film, the Shadowhunters' creative team adopted an ambitious "Dark Knight this material" philosophy.

"We don't have the hubris to compare ourselves to Chris Nolan," executive producer Ed Decter says, "but there were Batman comic books, a TV series and movies before Chris Nolan came along with his Batman and said, 'I'm doing it my way. It's going to very dark. It's going to be very sexy. It's not going to look exactly the way it's looked before.'

"Our decision was we already have a movie

that looked a certain way," continues Decter. "We have the books and we were going to take a dark, sexy, exciting approach on this material and freshen it up a bit. In the books, there's wonderful descriptions of what the Institute looks like. We did our updated version of the Institute's appearance, yet still gave a nod to things mentioned in the book."

While embarking on her journey, Clary develops feelings for fellow Shadowhunter, Jace. And there was another controversial romance that also needed to be addressed.



"We believe that the Magnus/Alec dynamic is unique in fantasy movies," says Decter. "There's not that many that have a central gay relationship. We wanted to add some twists and turns for the fans of the books that they will not expect, but then also honour that kind of landmark relationship in a huge way."

Shadowhunters isn't all teen drama. With a logline that states, "All the legends are true", Decter promises plenty of conflict and fighting between the various supernatural factions.

"There's all the different realms of the Downworld, so we have vampire action, we have werewolf action and we have the Fair Folk action," reports Decter. "There's mysticism. We have warlocks who deliver a lot of magic and action. It's a very VFX heavy show and we try to deliver a couple of signature pieces of both action and visual effects every episode."

The Harry Potter films raised the bar on YA, fantasy properties. Other fare such as Beautiful Creatures and The Seeker: The Dark Is Rising attempted to duplicate that success, but failed miserably. Decter believes Shadowhunters'



## Red Alert



characters, mythology and themes will help the TV series break away from the pack.

"There's a political structure governing all these worlds, which the Shadowhunters administrate and which the villain is trying to destroy," Decter concludes. "What happens directly affects vampires, werewolves and warlocks and they are all interconnected. Woven within this story structure is a very political tale, as well as a very romantic and personal tale. That's what makes it interesting."

Shadowhunters airs on ABC Family from 12 January 2016. A UK airdate is TBC.



## **ROUND UP**

NEWBIES → Philip Pullman's

His Darl Materials trilogy heading to BBC One as an eight-part series.

getting a TV adaptation from The Sarah Connor Chronicles' Josh Friedman.

→ Neil LaBute bringing Van Helsing to Syfy, as a gender-swapped Vanessa Helsing. → New episodes of Mystery Science Theater 3000

incoming after a crowdfunding campaign. > Fargo's Noah Hawley adapting Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle as a limited series

> Twilight author **Stephenie Meye** bringing Daniel O'Malley's 2012 Buffy meets Ghostbusters" novel The Rook

to Hulu.

→ Beyond, from Tim Kring, greenlit at ABC Family. It's about a voung man who wakes up with supernatural powers after 12 vears in a coma. > Continuum boss Simon Barry adapting zombie novel Dead Mann

Walking for CBS.



#### SAMIRA AHMED

HOST OF **NEWSWATCH** WALKS US THROUGH HER SCI-FI FAVES

#### Favourite SF/fantasy film?

→ I grew up on dystopian SF films on TV in the '70s. But The Andromeda Strain (1971) was the one that left the greatest mark. I was obsessed with its sterilising process and coloured levels as the scientists descended further. When I went on the Hong Kong underground last year I was ridiculously excited to find the colour coded stations were an exact match for The Andromeda Strain's levels.

#### **Favourite SF/fantasy TV show?**

→ Star Trek overall but Space: 1999 was a huge influence, even though it was so bleak. I adored Maya - the Spock-like alien who also scored the Italian boyfriend. My mum took me to the Space: 1999 walkthrough experience at Selfridges in about 1975. I once interviewed Martin Landau who, brilliantly, still talks seriously like Commander Koenig about the rules of life on Moonbase Alpha.

#### Favourite SF/fantasy book?

The Handmaid's Tale is hauntingly good because, like the original Planet Of The Apes films, it's about a society ruled by religious fundamentalism. There is nothing more frightening in SF or plausible, than a retreat to the irrational.

#### Favourite SF/fantasy comic?

→ I discovered Wonder Woman on my first trip to America in 1976 and still collect Silver and Bronze Age issues. Issue 206 fascinates me, when she finds she has a black sister called Nubia and has to fight her. Wonder Woman rarely had the writers she deserved, but she - and her sister are the greatest.

Read more of Samira's writing at www.samiraahmed.co.uk.



66 DON'T QUOTE ME 77

"I THOUGHT IT WAS TOO LONG. THE STORY WAS KIND OF WEAK – IT COULD HAVE BEEN CONDENSED. IT KIND OF WENT ON TOO LONG. IT REALLY DID."

Pierce Brosnan has some harsh words for SPECTRE.



Cuse says the 300-foot walls placed on the freeways in Los Angeles are a metaphor for the city's awful traffic.

# COLONY

#### The alien occupation show from Lost's Carlton Cuse, where collaboration means survival

#### IT'S INFORMED BY HISTORY

Since the ending of Lost, Carlton Cuse has firmly embraced his genre credibility, developing and co-showrunning a host of dramas from The Strain to Bates Motel. For this latest series, Colony, Cuse tells Red Alert that the idea came from World War Two. "[Writer] Ryan Condal and I are both interested in WW2 and we had seen these pictures of affluent Parisians sitting in sidewalk cafes drinking espressos while Nazi stormtroopers are going by in the streets. We thought is there some way to do that in a modern context?"

#### THERE ARE ALIENS IN AMERICA

Colony posits a current reality where an alien force hovering in massive ships let humanity live a semi-normal existence. "We came up with Los Angeles being occupied by this mysterious invading force," Cuse explains. "We tried really hard to subvert all the traditional expectations for an alien

invasion show like Falling Skies, where we are literally at war with alien beings. That's not what we wanted the show to be about. We wanted it to be about how reordering society affects the interpersonal relationships of people. There's this incredible propensity humans have to subjugate one another when given the opportunity and that's what we want to explore."

#### FRIENDS REUNITE

Cuse worked with Josh Holloway for six years on Lost and admits he wrote Colony with Holloway in mind as the lead, Will Bowman. "I did not have a shadow of a doubt that he would kill in this part," Cuse enthuses. "Will is a family guy with three kids and he's been separated from one of his kids, so his focus is external. How do I put my family back together and then how do I keep them safe is his agenda."

#### **FAMILY IS EVERYTHING**

Together with his wife, Katie, played by The Walking Dead's Sarah Wayne Callies, Will has to figure out what to do when he's asked by the alien's human proxy, Snyder (Peter Jacobson), to monitor his peers and report back. "It's about the choices we all make," Cuse offers. "Will and Katie make distinct choices that are separate from one another because they each believe that the choice they're making is the best for their family. It's interesting to see they can make these diametrically opposed choices but be firmly and irrevocably convinced that they are each doing the right thing."

#### THERE ARE BIG SECRETS

Aside from ships and some tech, Colony doesn't reveal much about our new overlords. Cuse says that's for a reason. "The audience really only knows as much as the characters and the characters are trying to learn about the world they live in. We didn't want to have some character give us this big expositional download which wasn't interesting at all. So over the course of the first 10 hours you will learn a fair amount more but there will still be existing mysteries. The [characters] won't know everything about the world by the end of the first season for sure." 😷



## Red Alert

SCI-FAC

The title Cry Havoc is taken from William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.



## HOUR OF THE WOLF

Simon Spurrier lets slip the Dogs of War with lycanthropic lesbian comic Cry Havoc

"Apart from anything else it's really great to tell a story with bloody great monsters from all over the world." Resembling a folklore-infused X-Men, Simon Spurrier's new Image series Cry Havoc is an exploration of what it means to be a little bit different in contemporary society, with plenty of gruesome beasts to boot.

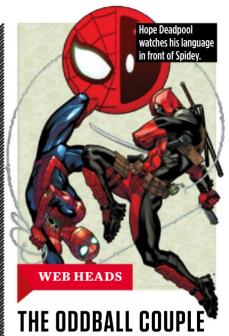
"The gimmick is that each issue we focus more on a particular monster," says Spurrier. "It's lovely to be able to tell a monster story that has everything in it about what I love about classic monster stories, including action, horror and tension, but it's also quite cerebral and thoughtful as it deals with its subject matter in a very unusual way."

The story moves from Shoreditch to the Middle East as gay musician Louise Canton is forced to come to terms with her lycanthropic nature before joining forces with a crack troop of mercenaries, who are dispatched on a perilous mission to track down a rogue general.

"We've been saying that it's not about a lesbian werewolf going to war but it kind of is," laughs Spurrier. "But it also really isn't because she's not a werewolf at all. She just assumes she is because that's the prevalent myth that you'd expect to encounter when faced with doggish. occultist stuff. But actually European mythology in general, and British myths in particular, are saturated with black dog iconography."

According to Spurrier, he wanted to tell his tale from the point of view of one of those rapidly disappearing myths. "I found myself sticking in some right timely stuff from the real world, such as the war in Afghanistan," he says. "So it ended up being a lot about big pharma, government control and depression."

Cry Havoc #1 is published on 27 January.



**Spider-Man/Deadpool** could be the Marvel Team-Up from hell

Having originally collaborated on the Merc With the Mouth's first monthly series in 1997. Joe Kelly and Ed McGuinness are reuniting to once again chronicle the Crimson Nutcase's increasingly surreal adventures. But this time they're bringing the Wall-crawler with them in Spider-Man/Deadpool.

"It's what we would call a two-hander, as you almost trade from issue to issue who is going to be the main character." Kelly says. "You know that they're both important and funny, but they have to be funny in different ways. You have to make sure that Spidey is not just the straight man and that Deadpool isn't always the goofball. That evolves over time, as Deadpool starts out cracking wise and being a total knucklehead, which is the Deadpool we love, while Spidey is a bit more responsible."

While he declines to detail exactly why the pair join forces, Kelly reveals that they are initially far from best buddies. "Spidev makes it clear that he wants nothing to do with Deadpool," he says. "Despite the fact that the world seems to like Deadpool after the events of the summer, Spidey is all, 'you're still a killer and a complete maniac!' It takes a while for their relationship to warm up. And although each episode is a standalone, their overall arc takes a while to build up." •

Spider-Man/Deadpool #1 is published by Marvel on 6 January.

S C - F A C T Despite several cartoons and TV specials, this is the first *Peanuts* film to hit cinemas.



STUDIO SPEAK

We're also hearing that the movie has major fantastical elements!

## DOG DAY CARTOON

Charlie Brown and his pals are coming to the big screen in *The Peanuts Movie* 

Forget the Avengers, Charles
Schultz was creating a shared universe of characters when Tony Stark was still just a twinkle in Stan Lee's specs. The strip debuted in 1950 (13 years before Avengers), and each character – from Linus to Lucy, Peppermint Patty to Pig-Pen – has their own army of admirers. Did the filmmakers at Blue Sky Studios (the outfit behind *Ice Age*) feel like they were working on an Avengers-style movie, trying to balance all those iconic characters?

"Yes, no doubt. It was probably the greatest motivator for myself, and a lot of us working on this movie, knowing that these characters have been important to people around the

world in so many different ways," director Steve Martino says.

"We're fans first and foremost, so are our friends, and everybody's got their favourite character. I've got a good friend who just loves Schroeder. He says, 'There's got to be more Schroeder! More piano playing!' But we're servicing the thematic story, and its heart is Snoopy and Charlie Brown."

Senior animator Nick Bruno agrees. "It's funny, I'd never thought about those poor guys who had to do all of those Marvel characters, thinking of all the pain and anguish we went through trying to make sure we got everyone right," he says.

"You can so easily say good and bad things about those movies, but they went through it too! As fans, you can't help but say, 'I've got to see Charlie Brown try to kick that football.' But

our compass was always that we had a story to tell. If those elements help the story along, then great. The story was the most important thing."

The Peanuts Movie opens on 21 December.





Chloe Sullivan in Smallville



The longest-running American superhero TV show in history, Smallville packed dozens of DC Comics characters into its ten seasons. Yet its greatest contribution to pop culture may be its original creation, Justice League coordinator Chloe Sullivan – as played by the charming Allison Mack.

#### Would you like to play Chloe again?

→ It depends on the context. I think it would have to be something short.

#### What's the strangest request you've had from a fan?

→ Outside of marriage? I've been proposed to [laughs].

#### Would any of Chloe's skills or attributes have been useful in real life?

→ Totally. She's way smarter than I am.

#### Is there anything from Smallville that you wished existed in real life? → No, I like life.

#### What would Chloe be doing now?

→ I think she would be running the Justice League, I think she would be married to Oliver Queen, and I think they would be fighting the good fight and having a solid relationship between two superheroes.

#### Did you keep any souvenirs?

→ I have a pair of earrings somewhere.

And I have a lot of clothes!

#### What would it say on Chloe's gravestone?

→ She was committed to goodness and truth.





Alex Kurtzman's first writing gig was on Hercules: The Legendary Journeys.



#### WILL IT BE SET ON A STARFLEET SHIP?

The press release seems to confirm this will be a ship-bound show (hard to seek new worlds otherwise, unless you go the Stargate route). But what if it's an alien ship, rather than a Starfleet vessel? Could we be introduced to an entirely new race? Or what if the show focuses, BSG-style, on a group of refugees looking for a home (very topical)? There are other alternatives to those five-year missions...



#### WILL THERE BE CROSSOVERS FROM THE MOVIE CAST?

Assuming the series is set in the same era as Kirk's voyages, will there be any opportunity for the crew of the Enterprise to pop up in a few episodes? Okay, perhaps not The Big Three, but seeing Sulu on TV would be pretty

cool, for instance. There's also potential for the films and TV series to interact in the same way Agents Of SHIELD does with the Marvel movies. Mmm, tantalising...

#### HOW WILL IT TACKLE BIG ISSUES?

The press release from CBS claims that the show will be "exploring the dramatic contemporary themes that have been a signature of the franchise since its inception". As well it should: after all, original Trek covered everything from racism to war. However, there's a danger that turning the series into a heavy, Battlestar Galactica-esque morality drama would lose some of the charm and joy we've come to associate with the franchise over the years. Don't go too far, guys.

#### COULD IT BE ANOTHER REBOOT OF ANOTHER TREK SHOW?

CBS has said there'll be a new cast of characters, but could this be misdirection? We've already seen the original Trek series revamped and recast, so what if this new series chooses to remake The Next Generation or Deep Space Nine? (Let's hope they forget about Voyager or Enterprise...) Our gut feeling says



they'll whip up a whole new show in order to keep things fresh, but perhaps there will be offshoots of the others.

#### WILL IT BE SERIALISED OR EPISODIC?

There are those who'd argue that Star Trek worked best when every episode was a standalone tale, à la the original series. Others would say that giving each season a story arc is the only way to go - Deep Space Nine did it magnificently. With the fashion today for arc-plots, we suspect the latter; longer narrative stories tend to be the most rewarding. This could well be less an anthology series and more of a long-running drama.

The new Star Trek TV show airs January 2017 on CBS All Access.



Get sci-fi news, reviews and features at gamesradar.com/sfx

Publisher Rebellion bought the 2000 AD imprint in the year 2000, appropriately.



## ROVER'S RETURN

Big Finish are venturing back to the Village in a new version of **The Prisoner** 

For a show that lasted a scant 17 episodes, Patrick McGoohan's The Prisoner left an indelible mark on British sci-fi; so much so that attempts to resurrect Number Six in the years since have proven less successful than the average run-in with Rover. Big Finish hopes to buck that trend with The Prisoner Volume 1 - a full-cast audio drama which reinterprets the original series.

"It never occurred to me to do a continuation," says writer/director Nicholas Briggs. "How could you continue something that ends in an utterly inexplicable, allegorical way? I wanted anyone who loves The Prisoner to enjoy it in a slightly different way."

Three of the box set's four hour-long episodes will be familiar to fans of the series - Departure And Arrival, The Schizoid Man and The Chimes Of Big Ben. But Briggs has also penned a new tale - Your Beautiful Village

- which sees Number Six deprived of his senses. "I wanted to do an episode that could only have worked on audio," Briggs enthuses. "It's also about certain revelations in Six's relationship with someone who has been in the Village a lot longer than him and who doesn't necessarily represent the side of authority."

Mark Elstob has the unenviable task of following in Patrick McGoohan's gargantuan footsteps while Celia Imrie, John Standing, Ramon Tikaram and Michael Cochrane all take up residence in Number Two's ball chair. Further box sets remain unconfirmed, but Briggs already knows which stories he'd like to tackle next. "I want to do 'Many Happy Returns'. And 'Hammer Into Anvil'. And 'A, B And C'. I want to do them all really!" •

The Prisoner Volume 1 is released on disc and as a download in January.



#### DREDD RECKONING

Documentary Future Shock! tells the incredible story of long-running British comic 2000 AD

Punk comic 2000 AD has been thrilling earthlets since 1977, but it's taken till now for a

documentary to chronicle its meteoric rise. Future Shock! came about when director Paul Goodwin, and producers Sean Hogan and Helen Mullane united in their desire to tell a story they felt had been ignored.

Goodwin wanted to "go to the creators and hear them speak and really champion them, especially people like Pat Mills" (right). He also wanted to show that the influence of the comic was incredibly wide: "2000 AD is the comic that people don't know they like. Its pop cultural influence is massive and yet too many people are unaware of it."

Appearing in the doc are 2000 AD stalwarts like Alan Grant and John Wagner, alongside Neil Gaiman and Dredd star Karl Urban. The film's animations and visuals riff on classic 2000 AD art, and the filmmakers commissioned a soundtrack that Hogan says is: "a mixture of punk and that kind of retro-electronic aesthetic that we associated with that 1970s era."

Expect a frank look at the highs and lows of the comic's history. Mullane says: "We did forewarn people involved that we had no intention of sugarcoating, even though we are fans of the comic to this day. If 2000 AD has taught us anything, it is to question your heroes!" •

Future Shock! The Story Of 2000 AD is out now on DVD.





If James Nesbitt had a lucky bracelet he'd use it to become the greatest ever centre forward for Manchester Utd.



Hitting the crime-ridden streets of London in Stan Lee's *Lucky Man* 

#### CHARACTER WITNESS

• "Harry's a complicated character. He's a cop, but very flawed. He's lost everything as a result of his gambling. But he does have a strong moral compass. He believes in the difference between right and wrong, good and evil."

#### FORTUNE AND GLORY

• "He's always been very unlucky, but after a strange encounter Harry ends up with this bracelet which gives him the ability to control luck, which is actually what Stan Lee thought would be the best superhero power to have. At first it's amazing because he is able to use it for his own devices, but he soon realises that with the ability to control luck comes huge responsibility."

#### SECRET ORIGINS

• "You find out why and how [the bracelet] has come into existence. You can see certainly why people are desperate to have it and why it's important that it is with the right person. At times it is in the background as the crime element takes over, but it's all connected to the bracelet."

#### LIFE OF CRIME

• "It spans 10 weeks and I think people will be as intrigued by the thriller element. We have an underworld crime supremo trying to take over London, and that really has got the hue of a superhero story to it, but also the crime stories are I think quite interesting."

#### HARD TARGET

• "The cases are more or less grounded, but there's always the element of the bracelet and how Harry uses it to unravel the stories. But quite often the stories will involve people who are aware of the bracelet. It's like the Grail, people are desperate to use it for their own evil deeds."

Stan Lee's Lucky Man airs on Sky 1 from early 2016.



## Hard facts, wild speculation

The latest on Alien V: "kinda holding/pending Prometheus 2" according to Neill Blomkamp.

## ALIEN: COVENANT

Prometheus's survivors go to meet their makers

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Sir Ridley Scott's Prometheus sequel finally admits it's really an Alien prequel. In fact, Scott's confirmed that Alien: Covenant (previously Paradise Lost) is the second of a trilogy that will result in a certain croissant-shaped ship crashing on LV-426 and giving John Hurt an upset tummy.

• We'll be rejoining the disembodied head of mildly treacherous astrodroid David (Michael Fassbender) and (we're guessing, though this is yet to be officially confirmed) Dr Elizabeth Shaw (Noomi Rapace), last seen plotting a course to the Engineers' home planet, to find out why those big bald "gods" have it in for the human race. There are plans to ensure that David's "immobile noggin" status doesn't cause a drag on the action - we're hoping Dalek, but a JARVIS-like commentary is more likely.

Shaw and David aren't the only things on the menu though. The film will follow the crew of the colony ship Covenant, Bound for a planet on the far side of the galaxy, they discover what they think is an uncharted paradise, only to realised that it's actually a dark, dangerous world. No. not Pontins. Prestatvn. but a planet whose sole inhabitant is David Question is, what's he done with Shaw? And while this band of intergalactic wanderers is not officially Weyland-Yutani sponsored, we doubt it's a coincidence they meet.

#### MEETING THE MAKERS

O The Miltonesque title that the film previously had (Alien: Paradise Lost) suggested that things have all gone a bit splatty in "heaven". Shaw, David and the crew of the

Covenant arrive at the Engineers' planet looking for answers only to discover that mankind's creators' appalling arsenal has been misfired with rather horrible results. But while the locals have been decimated, the new food-chain toppers are eager to show any tourists the best dining spots...

#### THE BITCH IS BACK?

Not quite. As with Prometheus, these bio-mechanical weapons are distant cousins of your classic Alien, so expect them for the most part to have that same feel of familiarbut-different. But Covenant will start exploring exactly how and why the more famous brand of xenomorph was created, so expect to see a peek of that iconic double jaw.

#### RIPLEY RETURNS?

Sir Riddles has let slip that he's thrown in a reference to Ellen Ripley. Fans hoping for a Sigourney Weaver cameo should unsticky their palms though - we'd bet on this being nothing more than a familiar surname on the travellers' crew log: anyone thinking a badass space momma?

#### FIVE ALIVE

Covenant goes into production before the Neill Blomkamp-directed Alien V. Ripley will turn up here very much alive, along with Michael Biehn's returning Hicks, but don't expect any crossover with Covenant - it will likely be taking its cues from James Cameron: this time it really will be war.

#### WHEN TO EXPECT IT

Alien: Covenant will attach itself to faces on 6 October 2017.

#### 6 don't quote me 灯

"I REMEMBER STARTING TO SHOOT SUPER 8 AND STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS AND FEELING LIKE I HADN'T REALLY SOLVED SOME FUNDAMENTAL STORY PROBLEMS."

Let's hope JJ Abrams has Star Wars all worked out.



## **ROUND UP**

SHOWRUNNING → The Walking Dead, Ash Vs Evil Dead. American **Horror Story** and Z Nation all renewed for new seasons.

CASTING CALL → Papa Winchester (aka Jeffrey Dean Morgan) cast as major comic villain Negan in The Walking Dead. He'll appear in the season six finale. → Mr Freeze is coming to Gotham. House Of Cards' Nathan Darrow will play Victor Fries in an upcoming episode. → Fringe's Georgina Haig signs up for a recurring role → Miguel Ferrer's FBI agent Albert Rosenfeld returning to Twin Peaks. Jennifer Jason Leigh also cast. > Penny Dreadful adds Brian Cox as Jared Talbot, the father of Josh Hartnett's Ethan Chandler. → Wil Wheaton joining the cast of Powers for its second season. His character will also be introduced into upcoming issues of the comic.





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Uwe Boll made a bid to direct Warcraft. Thankfully Duncan Jones got the job instead.

## WARCRAFT: THE BEGINNING

Journey to the world of *Warcraft* in the Orc-some first trailer



This is Karazhan, the impressive magical tower of Ben Foster's powerful mage Medivh.



Who needs planes when you can travel by griffin? That's Medivh's apprentice Khadgar (Ben Schnetzer) at the back.



Welcome to Stormwind, the main human city of Azeroth. In the middle there is the Cathedral



\delta Skilled warrior Anduin Lothar (Travis Fimmel) inspects the body of a murdered soldier - could this be a result of an Orc ambush?



King Llane (Dominic Cooper) isn't too impressed with the new invaders in his homeland.



Durotan (Toby Kebbell) and his second-incommand Orgrim Doomhammer (Rob Kazinsky) look over Westfall



He may only be a wee bairn now but Durotan's son, Thrall, will go on to lead the Orcs.



That gate in the background is the Dark Portal, which the Orcs use to escape Draenor, their dying homeworld, and travel to Azeroth



🗖 Glimpsed briefly here is Orc warlock Gul'dan - a bad egg who damns many of his race with nasty fel magic



🏠 This is Garona (Paula Patton), a half Draenei Orc who sides with the humans and hits it off with Lothar.



magic also turns Orcs' skins green, like this Orc Durotan is punching in the head.



Lothar rides his Griffin into battle at the Dark Portal, the show-off.

#### The Buzz



JORDAN A great live action videogame movie is long overdue. so I've got high hopes

for Warcraft. Some of the effects need a little work, but this trailer is full of dazzling stuff.



**DAVE** Since the end of The Hobbit series I've been itching for my next dose of epic fantasy

- maybe it's arrived. I'm excited by the possibilities of good Orcs, a nuance Tolkien never explored.



**JON** My 14-year-old self would be hugely excited by the concept, but this trailer feels very much

about hitting all the familiar beats. The scene with the tearful Orc looks visually impressive though



TARA It's hard for me to get excited about the emo Orcs on show here. Bursting with more CGI

than I'll ever need and clichés-aplenty, this has a very Lord Of The Rings-lite vibe.





SCI-FACI

Don't tell, but some southern England palace grounds will be standing in for Outlander's gardens of Versailles.



#### What is Rebel Of The Sands about?

→ It's a Wild West meets Arabian Nights fantasy about Amani, a 16-year-old sharpshooter desperate to get out of her dead end town, and Jin. a fighter wanted for treason. Their fates get tangled at a sharpshooting contest and the pair wind up on the run across a desert crawling with deadly ghouls.

#### How did you build the world?

> The foundation of the world came from mixing some of the tropes from classic Westerns with the mythology of the Arabian Nights, two desert worlds combined. I also think I was drawn towards including a world-changing rebellion because much of my studies focused on the French Revolution.

#### How long did you work on it?

→ It was probably about three years from the moment it entered my head to selling the book, from letting the idea build while I was trying to fall asleep, and taking long, sometimes

un-earned, writing breaks to try to unknot the plot.

#### Which sci-fi/fantasy authors would you like to be compared to in a dream review?

→ I'd love for my book to stay with young readers discovering fantasy, the same way Tamora Pierce, Robin McKinley and Mercedes

Lackey have stayed with me. In terms of contemporary fantasy authors, I'd be over the moon flattered if I were to be compared with the likes of Rae Carson, Leigh Bardugo or Marie Lu.

Rebel Of The Sands is published by Faber & Faber on 4 February.



## NEW BEGINNINGS

To France! Cross-time romance **Outlander** heads beyond Scotland's shores...

Part period piece, part time travel drama and part romantic character study, Outlander might be impossible to pigeonhole, but it's a genre hit. With Ronald D Moore returning as showrunner, season two adapts novelist Diana Gabaldon's second Outlander novel, Dragonfly In Amber. "The second book is more complex and more difficult to adapt so we've had to make more changes as a result," Moore says of how he's straying from the page. "We always try to get back to where the book was even if we can't do a scene or we change a scene. But it's a bigger, richer thing to try and wrangle into one-hour episodes."

Set primarily in France, season two sees Claire and Jamie trying to change history by preventing the Battle of Culloden. "The mood is different," Moore says of the overall tone this year. "They are walking around with the French aristocracy, who are completely

different people than the Scots. This is the most sophisticated and populated city in the world, in this era, and way before the French Revolution. It's French society at its zenith before it all starts to come apart and that has nothing to do with Castle Leoch or the clans. It's very much a fish out of water story in a lot of ways and just a different show."

Moore also teases that a time jump in the books will shape the series narrative too. "How we do it and when and where is some of the fun," he teases. "I like [the book readers] to have a series of discoveries and not sit there and go 'I know exactly what is going to happen next.' It's good to surprise them, and sometimes scare them when they think something is missing, but..." he smiles, "it's not." ●

Outlander season two airs in 2016 on Starz (US) and Amazon Prime Instant Video (UK).

SCI - FACT! Sequel play Harry Potter And The Cursed Child is already booked up well into 2017.





Sandman's Lucifer will soon appear in his own Fox TV show, starring Tom Ellis.



→ RIP original Leatherface Gunnar Hansen. original Batmobile creator George Barris and ET screenwriter Melissa Mathison → Brvan Fuller wants to reboot The Avengers as Steed. → Gary Oldman co-writing Blood Riders - a book that will "reinvent the rules and realities of vampires and sex and the power of love". → Lego Movie 2 director Rob Schrab has been teasing talks between Warner Bros and the Beeb over a Doctor Who cameo. > Call Of Duty and Destiny publishers Activision launching a film and TV studio to adapt their games for the screen. Up first: animated series Skylanders → The Librarians getting a literary spin-off - The Librarians And The Lost Lamp



Neil Gaiman isn't one to worry about what to do for an encore — or with an Overture. The scribe's Sandman: Overture is collected in DC's new The Sandman: Overture Deluxe Edition. Gaiman tells Red Alert he's excited to see JH Williams' art get the Deluxe treatment. "I had this giant cosmic epic in my head, and I knew that I needed somebody who could draw giant cosmic epics. So JH was basically our one choice. And bless him, he said yes." Though Gaiman has no immediate plans for a follow-up,

he says it has sparked ideas for other tales in the universe. "There's so much story - questions I haven't answered, things I know but I haven't said, things I don't quite know

In the meantime, Gaiman is awaiting Bryan Fuller's TV adaptation of his American Gods, due in January 2017.

"A lot of what they're doing that I really like right now is they're opening it up... There are characters who may have only had half a page in the book, or a couple of pages, who are gonna be major players; and there are characters who were important but off stage a lot in the book who are gonna be on stage, or at least on the screen. Because one of the things about the book is you are very much stuck inside Shadow's head looking out through Shadow's eyes. But the great thing about a TV series is there's no particular reason why you need to be stuck in Shadow's head looking out through Shadow's eyes."

Gaiman adds he'll probably write one of the show's second season scripts. "Only because there's a TV series that I'm currently writing. I should be wrapping up episode six right now, and I'm just about halfway though episode four. So my own TV series is sort of in front of everything."

On the film front, Edgar Wright and Johnny Depp are on board to direct and star in an adaptation of Gaiman's Fortunately, The Milk — with animation by The Lego Movie's Animal Logic, to whom Gaiman recommended Wright.

"The next thing I knew Edgar and I were having a meeting in Johnny Depp's mysterious offices in Hollywood, talking about who we'd like to write it. The first person we wanted was [Flight Of The Conchords'] Bret [McKenzie], and he said yes. So the process so far has just been one where we go out to people and they say yes."

Sandman: Overture is out now.



due October 2016.

most-watched US

debut this season

with 12.9 million

becomes the

viewers.

**66** don't quote me 🤫

but would love to discover ... "

"THE FANS AREN'T WRONG. THE FANS WANT WHAT THEY WANT AND IF THEY DON'T GET SATISFACTION, THEY LET YOU KNOW."

Everything you think about Fantastic Four is probably right according to Toby Kebbell.





## DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future



#### ICH BIN EIN BERLINER!

#### **MUTE**

Director **Duncan Jones** is returning to his indie sci-fi roots, following next summer's Warcraft: The Beginning with something a little more aligned with his lo-fi 2009 debut Moon. It's a long cherished dream project for the Jones boy - "I've been working towards making Mute for 12 years now," he says - and will reunite

him with two of his collaborators on Moon: Sam Rockwell and composer Clint Mansell ("Can't do sci-fi without Sam and Clint!"). Set in Berlin "40 years from today", it's pitched as "a science fiction Casablanca, exploring the shadows of an immigrant-filled city where East is clashing with West". True Blood's Alexander Skarsgård will play the mute bartender of the title, scouring the city for his missing

girlfriend, while Ant-Man star **Paul Rudd** is a potentially shady American surgeon. We're already imagining Bowie's Berlin trilogy meets Blade Runner and we like it.

#### SHE LIVES!

#### THE BRIDE OF **FRANKENSTEIN**

Another Universal horror icon is set to take the spotlight in the

studio's slate of monsterverse pictures. Famously incarnated in the shock-haired form of Elsa Lanchester in James Whale's 1935 classic, the Bride will earn a solo movie alongside the likes of Dracula and the Wolf Man. Universal plans to exhume a new monster movie on an annual basis, beginning with The Mummy in 2017. Expect a modern setting, a grounded approach and



## Red Alert

contemporary resonance. "This is not a heightened world," says writer/producer **Chris Morgan**. "We're exploring issues of family identity and questions of Where do I belong in this world?" Existentialism... from beyond the grave! "We're creating a mythology," fellow franchise supremo Alex Kurtzman tells Variety. "We're looking at this canon and thinking What are the rules? What can we break and what are the ones that are untouchable?"

#### TOWFRING AMBITION!

THE DARK TOWER The struggle to bring Stephen King's Dark Tower saga to the screen deserves a book of its own. Possibly eight. Each of them doorstoppers. The hellish, nearly decade-long development process may have felt like a trudge across Hollywood's very own apocalyptic wasteland of creative despair but hope may finally be in sight... Interstellar's Matthew **McConaughey** is the latest marquee name to be attached to the project, though whether he's circling King's hero Roland Deschain the Gunslinger or villainous sorcerer Randall Flagg, aka The Man In Black, remains to be seen. The adaptation is set to be directed by Nikolaj Arcel, co-writer of the Swedish version of The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo and helmer of 2012's Oscar nominated A Royal Affair. Sony has now nailed down a 13 January 2017 release. Ron Howard - once signed on as director - remains onboard as producer.

#### **GET THE BALL ROLLING!**

#### **INDIANA JONES 5**

Dut the hat down, Chris Pratt. And keep your filthy mitts off the bullwhip, Bradley Cooper. Despite rumblings of an imminent reboot for the snake-fearing relic chaser it looks like **Harrison Ford** may complete his nostalgic victory lap as Han Solo and Rick Deckard with another shot at Indy. Steven **Spielberg**'s certainly up for it - "I can't wait to work with you again on *Indiana Jones 5,*" he told Ford during a recent tribute show. "This is no announcement," he clarified,



## BURNING

→ Rihanna joining

Luc Bessoi

Valerian

And The

Thousand

City

OfA

Planets.. The Hobbit's Philippa Boyens adapting TA Barron's The Merlin Saga for Disney.. Martial artist Scott Adkins joining Doctor Strange... Edge Of Tomorrow's **Doug Liman** directing X-Men spin-off Gambit.. Asbæk joining Ghost In The Shell... Ralph Fiennes voicing Alfred in the Lego Batman Movie... Wrath Of The Titans Johnson writing Aquaman... Kelsey Grammer battling deadly spiders in Nest... The Witcher movie in development... Lena Headey joining horror thriller The Woman In The Woods... Kick-Ass's Chloë **Grace Moretz** playing *The Little* Mermaid... Nicole Kidman joining adap of Neil Gaiman's short story How To Talk To Girls At Parties and rumoured to be appearing in Wonder Woman... Mark Wahlberg's The Six Billion Dollar Man arriving 22 December 2017... Utopia's Dennis Kelly now rewriting World War Z 2... Rapper Becky G playing the Yellow Ranger in Power Rangers...

## 66 We're looking at this canon and thinking 'What are the rules?'

"just my fervent hope." Sorry, Steven, we think you'll find that's legally binding under article 17, paragraph 12 of the Don't Get Our Hopes Up Accord. Ford's equally game, it seems: "I'd love to do another Indiana Jones," he tells Entertainment Weekly. "A character that has a history and a potential. kind of a rollicking good movie ride for the audience. Steven Spielberg as a director - what's not to like? Producer Frank Marshall, meanwhile, insists, "We're not doing the Bond thing where we're going to call somebody else Indiana Jones... we have to figure this out." Pratt! The hat!

#### DARK DEEDS!

JUSTICE LEAGUE DARK With all the chatter about the upcoming roster of DC superhero movies one title that's slipped from the news feeds of late is Justice League Dark (Justice League Hazelnut and Justice League Salted Caramel will eventually complete the range). Teaming the more morally ambiguous characters from the shadows of the DCU, it was a dream project for Guillermo del Toro, who bailed on directing it earlier this year. Now comes word that it may still be in with a chance of a greenlight. Rumours peg Colin Farrell as Warner Bros's preferred choice for cocky occultist John Constantine with Monica Bellucci in the mix for Madame Xanadu and Ron Perlman a predictable possibility for Swamp Thing, with Ewan McGregor a fave for Jason Blood, alias Etrigan the Demon. The Dark Knight Rises' Ben **Mendelsohn** is said to be the frontrunner for the film's villain, Anton Arcane. Potential directors

include Evil Dead remake helmer Fede Alvarez

#### AFFIRMATIVE, MASTER!

#### K-9: TIMEOUAKE

Prepare for the ultimate indignity, Doctor - beaten to the big screen by your former trundling, laser-snouted robo-dog. Yes, while the Time Lord's cinematic ambitions remain a distant twinkle in the eves of BBC execs, tin hound K-9 is being lined up for a solo movie. It's set to be written by co-creator **Bob Baker** - better known these days for Wallace & Gromit - who retains the rights to the character. The villain of the piece is another Baker co-creation, the mad Time Lord Omega, who bedevilled 1973's "The Three Doctors" and 1983's "Arc Of Infinity". Pitched as an action adventure set in deep space, it promises to showcase a hi-tech K-9 "for today's cinema". The filmmakers are targeting a 2017 release. Somewhere the Blake's 7 crew are already shuddering at the thought of Orac: Positronic Gigolo...

#### CROFT'S ORIGINAL!

#### TOMB RAIDER

The Lara Croft reboot has finally locked a director. His name is Roar Uthaug, which should, by rights, belong to a bloodsmeared Viking berserker. In fact he's a Norwegian filmmaker, the director of this year's Scandidisaster flick The Wave and 2006 thriller Cold Prev. There's a new screenwriter in the frame too: Geneva Robertson-Dworet, one of the co-writers of Transformers 5 whose unproduced screenplay *Hibernation* – a high-concept futuristic thriller - garnered some sizeable buzz on Hollywood's fabled Black List. Lara was last seen on the big screen way back in 2003's Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Cradle Of Life. The new movie will take its cue from the game franchise and prequelise the PlayStation icon, giving us a life-shaping origin adventure that will, no doubt, explain the complex psychological underpinnings behind those semi-orgasmic grunts and tight, tight shorts. •



# There's a whole universe to explore beyond this magazine THIS MONTH ON

### THIS MONTH ON jamesradar+



Five things to look out for on our massive entertainment portal at gamesradar.com/sfx

With Evos back on our TV screens in Heroes Reborn, GR+ has been arguing over which show is better - the original or the reboot. Check out http://bit.ly/sfxheroes for the verdict. (There's more on Heroes on p122.)

The Force Awakens won't be picking up exactly where Return Of The Jedi left off. Do your revision by checking out our video round-up of what's been happening in the Star Wars galaxy during the 30 years between the two films... http://bit.ly/sfxstars

With the release of the final Hunger Games movie, we've been taking a look at the best moments from the series (so far...) and have come to the conclusion we're just not ready to say goodbye... http://bit.ly/sfxhunger

What's that you say? Your two favourite TV shows are Doctor Who and Game Of Thrones? Then check out 20 (yes, 20!) actors who've been in both series...

http://bit.ly/throneswho

With most videogame-based movies being duds, you're right to be wary of Assassin's Creed, but we think there's good reason to hope it will be the first great one. Here's why... http://bit.ly/sfxass



#### Magazines & Beyond 😃

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http://bit.ly/SFXnewsletter



Total Film has gone absolutely Star Wars bonkers this issue, with a massive look at The Force Awakens, interviews with the key cast, a pair of free Topps Star Wars art cards, and more

extras than you can shake a lightsaber at. Also: Tarantino's filming diaries from The Hateful Eight, a look into the unpleasantness that went into making The Revenant, a huge interview with Kurt Russell, and much more. Plus, the latest reviews of every movie hitting the big screen. If your newsagent doesn't have it, ask a Sith Lord if he can find new ways to motivate them.

#### JJ ABRAMS: THE ULTIMATE CELEBRATION



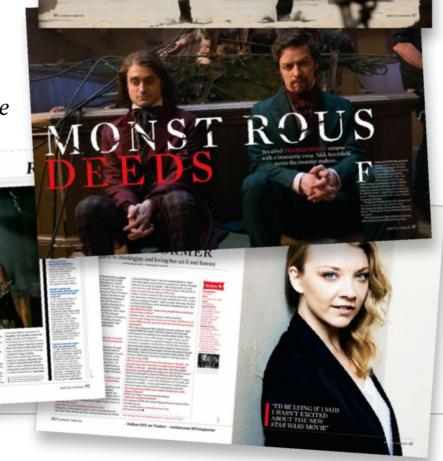
With The Force Awakens upon us, what better time to celebrate the illustrious career of its director JJ Abrams. From Lost, Fringe and Alias to Mission: Impossible III,

Cloverfield we bring you interviews behind-the-scenes glimpses and on-set reports from his TV and movie highlights. Plus, we check in with the cast and crew of Episode VII to reveal everything you need to know about that galaxy far, far away ahead of the biggest movie event of 2015. The Force is strong with this one.



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Reviews

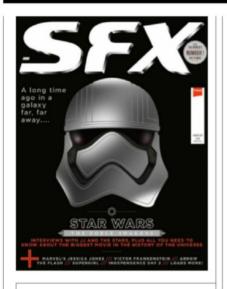
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## **||||SFX HAILING FREQUENCIES OPEN!||||** Hirst Contact



#### THIS MONTH'S COMMUNICATIONS MONITOR

#### JORDAN FARLEY, **COMMUNITY EDITOR**



With 2016 approaching faster than the Flash when he's desperate

for the loo, this month you interfaced with the SFX mailpod to let us know about your favourite films and TV of 2015. Spoilers: there was a lot of love for *Daredevil*, Ant-Man and Mad Max: Fury Road. Of course, a certain Force-related feature doesn't arrive until 17 December, which we suspect plenty of you are saving a space on your end of year lists for. Check back in two issues time for a galaxy of Star Wars correspondence.

## Hot Topic Your views on the month's big issue

#### #FAVOURITE FILM AND TV **OF 2015**

- Dan Morton, Facebook Daredevil and Ant-Man... or maybe Mad Max: Fury Road. I'm torn. But definitely Daredevil!
- Doug Browning, Facebook Mad Max: Fury Road for film, Doctor Who for TV!
- OMediumAtomicWeight, GamesRadar+ Thank goodness for DC in 2015! The Flash was an absolute breath of fresh air: bold, colourful, playful and witty. Standing proudly alongside the equally breezy Gotham and Supergirl, I can finally enjoy the big return of fun to my TV screen. How refreshing it is to kick back in front of the telly and be thrilled and entertained without referring to furiously scribbled notes tracking convoluted plots and endless characters. It's like being a kid on Saturday mornings watching Adam West's Batman all over again.
- SFX Strange how DC's bright and breezy TV output is almost the tonal opposite of its dark and gritty film universe. Have to say, I'm

much more enamoured with DC TV so far, especially The Flash.

- Dob Pierce, Facebook Ant-Man! Amazing what they did on such a small budget! I also liked Jurassic World, it was a proper Alienstype sequel.
- Matt Abney, Twitter Game Of Thrones. Weakest season so far, but it's still the best thing on TV.
- Jacob Southgate, Twitter Ex\_Machina was great thought-provoking and really tense.
- Paul Downey, Facebook Jurassic World. Ant-Man and Mad Max: Fury Road have been superb. For TV Hannibal and The Flash. Also loved Tales Of Halloween, The Final Girls and Lost After Dark.
- SFX I'm obliged to point out that Hannibal isn't science fiction, but we'll let you off because it's ACE.
- Ocortney Fry. email Inside Out made me blub more than a newborn baby. If there's any iustice it'll be the first animated film to win Best Picture at the Oscars.
- David Shaw, Facebook Loving Heroes Reborn. Hope it continues in this form.
- 🔾 Sean Easton, email Humans was great. Similar subject matter to Ex\_Machina, but setting it in a world that was more recognisably our own gave it a much bigger impact.





## First Contact

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#### 66 Daredevil and Ant-Man... or maybe Mad Max. I'm torn >>

👽 Jess Coleman, Facebook The Martian – best Ridley Scott film since Gladiator and a (whisper it) better version of that story than Andy Weir's book.

SFX Proof, were it needed, that Sir Ridders can still make a great film with the right script. All eyes on vou. Alien: Covenant.

Oli Cobb, email Had loads of fun with Kingsman: The Secret Service. Preferred it to SPECTRE, which I never thought I'd say at the start of the year.

Jo Lyon, Twitter Took a while to make its way to the UK, but Agent Carter was brilliant. MUCH prefer it to Agents Of SHIELD, which I now have no intention of watching when it returns for season three.

SFX Just as I expected from SFX readers, you all have excellent taste. For what it's worth, my favourites of 2015 (so far) are Mad Max: Fury Road and Daredevil, with Song Of The Sea and The Flash not far behind.



#### **#GENERATION NEXT**

Keith Tudor, email The news that there is a new Star Trek TV series in development is fantastic. Other than repeats, it has been over a decade since the last episode of Star Trek: Enterprise aired, and in that time there have only been two successful movies. I hope the series will continue the tradition and be entertaining as well as reflecting modern society in a sci-fi setting. I'm also still hoping Deep Space Nine and Voyager will get a high def upgrade and Blu-ray release, as CBS did amazing work with the previous releases. **SFX** A new series of Trek is very welcome news (see p17), especially given the dearth of space shows in recent years. I'm afraid you're the only person in existence who wants to watch Voyager again though, let alone in hi-def, Keith.

#### **#THE DEATHLY WHO-LOWS**

Andrew Modd, email Recently Doctor Who appears to have become an exploration of death and all its facets. The end of the last series powerfully investigated the concept of heaven and resurrection. It was followed by the Christmas episode which included a look at the acceptance of death. We now have a current series arc on the problems of bestowing/regretting immortality. However, there have also been references to the Doctor's last will and testament, the odd concept of undying Daleks and of course ghosts galore (including the Doctor's). Perhaps we should be calling Capaldi the Death Doctor? SFX Well, anything's better than "Doctor Disco".

#### **#SPOT THE TARDIS**

Linda Scholefield, email I am loving the new series of Doctor Who. especially the Zygons. But having been brought up with watching Doctor Who all my life for me it's not just about the Doctor and his companions having adventures, it's also about the TARDIS and the Sonic Screwdriver. This new series



you're lucky if you catch a glimpse of the TARDIS and it's such a shame when you have that fantastic interior. Whatever happened to the "mad man in a box"? You never get to see his box now, and don't even get me started on the Sonic Sunglasses. I know you have to keep things fresh and modern, but I think that this series they are totally destroying the programme's history. Without the TARDIS and the Sonic Screwdriver it's just not Doctor Who, it could be any old show about time-travelling. **SFX** Wait till you find out that those question mark undies are actually his new Sonic Boxers...

#### **#HYDE AND SEEK**

John Pannell, email I'm all for a new fantasy on TV and ITV's Jekyll And Hyde on a Sunday night looked a promising idea. As the end titles rolled so did the disappointment and amazement at what ITV regarded as a family show. During the episode three children were attacked, one burnt to death, there was a creature half-dog half-man which frankly wouldn't look out of place in Hellraiser, a woman beaten up in an alley, but worst of all there was the script, or rather the lack of it. Clunky lines were batted back and forth with only the wonderful Richard E Grant managing to rise above them. ITV never get these fantasy shows right, remember Demons, and >

## First Contact



Primeval didn't fall into place until the last two series. Let's only hope they don't do a fantasy series about a bloke in a telephone box! SFX Have to disagree with you John, three episodes in (at the time of writing) and I'm finding Jekyll And Hyde huge fun. And the "family show" complaints are clearly nonsense. I grew up reading far grimmer things on the pages of Goosebumps and I turned out fine. Mostly.

#### **#BRUCE ALMIGHTY**

Fred DeRuvo, email The showrunners at Gotham need to focus. There is already too much going on and only very little to do with Bruce Wayne. Less is actually more in many cases. Gotham could be a well thought out TV series. Instead, viewers are overwhelmed with characters and action that really don't move things forward but merely exist as a form of self-indulgence, masquerading as intelligent entertainment. **SFX** Despite having the exact same problem with Gotham's first season I found the first few episodes of season two a big improvement, precisely because they focus on a smaller group of characters. Bruce is still a wet towel though.

#### **#CORRECTION CORNER**

Alan Cooper, email "Which is the only film Lee appears in with Karloff?" you ask in issue 268's Christopher Lee Blastermind. Not iust Curse Of The Crimson Altar. I think Russell should check out Corridors Of Blood, in which Lee plays Resurrection Joe and Karloff plays Dr Bolton. It's quite an enjoyable film.

SFX Russell replies: "You're completely right, Alan, I'm a total dumbo! And I've seen Corridors Of Blood too, so I have even less excuse for my incompetence. Apologies to you and the other readers who spotted this. And you're right, it's a decent flick."

#### **#WE ALSO HEARD FROM**

Thomas Huartson, Facebook The film of The Golden Compass was nearly a great adaptation, but wasn't brave enough to include the book's original ending because of its potential controversy about it contradicting Christian beliefs. The new series has to have the courage to tell the whole story in order to convey the book's proper meaning. Otherwise further adaptations are pointless. Mike Garner, email I feel a thanks to the great TV god is needed. Thank you for allowing Marvel's Agents Of SHIELD to have a third season. What a programme it's turned into! Hunter has to be the new action hero and teaming with May is genius. Everyone is being used correctly and the storytelling is at its peak. The Simmons-centric episode is a real tour de force in writing and acting. Hopefully the amount of people watching will match the quality.

#### 66 I feel a thanks to the great god of television is needed ??

SFX Confession time: I gave up on SHIELD halfway through season two because I was finding it insufferably dull. Maybe it's time to catch up.

Neil Alsop, email Midwinter Of The Spirit was a truly appalling adaptation of Phil Rickman's novel and its very low ratings came as no surprise. Sadly, Stephen Volk seems to have lost his touch. **SFX** You could say it was an adaptation that lacked... spirit.

The Llama God, The Dark and Deeply **Cynical Lands That Remember, North of** the Wall Sometimes in television shows nods to continuity or publicly well-known production issues can raise a smile, as we, the viewers, receive some sort of assurance that the producers understand and acknowledge the world as well as we do. But sometimes, that sort of direct communication is unwise.

Take. Doctor Who's "The Girl Who Died" when we finally learn why the Twelfth Doctor looks like a character we've previously encountered. Rather than just ignoring it we are instead given A Reason. A deep, meaningful reason. That the Doctor chose that face to remind himself that not only is he not a young man, but also that he is someone who saves people. That's powerful.

Unfortunately, as a consequence, it also means that while he is indeed someone who saves people, if things get really dire then he'll give up and lock his children in a room and kill them, before committing suicide.

And also, possibly, that he's a shape-changing penguin. Isn't that just heart-warming, re-affirming, and more than a little confusing? **SFX** It's when the Doctor starts running round the corridors of Westminster dropping C-bombs that you've really got to worry.



memorabilia valued by the experts from auctioneers Vectis

Dave Reid sent us a picture of his set of die-cast cars from Ridlev Scott's 1982 classic Blade Runner, made by Ertl. It features Deckard's ground car his Chase Spinner Bryant's Police Spinner and Rachael's Spinner. 'They are 1/64 matchbox size and I've had them since the film came out. They are mint in box and it's never been opened. I did have the individual carded cars but foolishly opened them for display, then - even more foolishly - traded them!" We're just amazed Blade Runnei had toys associated with it...

BLADE A RUNNER

#### ANDY REED OF VECTIS SAYS:

The Blade Runner sets were mass-produced in 1982 to coincide with the release of the film. Although they don't come on to the market very often they don't command the same high prices as some of the other film/TV-related sets released at the same time. The Dukes Of Hazzard. for instance, were also issuing toys around then, and they were much more desirable.

If you've got a piece of memorabilia you'd like us to feature, send us a photo of your item with a few words about what it means to you, to sfx@futurenet. com, using the subject line Cash In The AT-AT.







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## First Contact

# 20,000 LEAGUES WHAT YOU SEE IN UP MOVIES



Bryan Singer goes sub-aquatic with an adaptation of Jules Verne's classic novel Illustration by Paul Garner

## 0 CO ட

#### EY UP BRY, WE KNOW 20,000 LEAGUES IS A CHILDHOOD FAVOURITE OF YOURS, BUT OUR READERS HAVE SOME IDEAS

#### KEEP IT REAL

You can do anything with CGI nowadays, but as Dr Ian Malcolm might say, Hollywood has been so preoccupied with whether or not they could that they didn't stop to think if they should. "Use as much real underwater photography as possible and not CGI. Like in *The Abyss*," says **Chicago-Ronin**.

#### A SENSE OF ADVENTURE

Sometimes you just want to have fun in a cinema. "Don't make it about climate change or saving the whales, 20,000 Leagues *Under The Sea* is a rip-roaring adventure about hunting giant sea creatures - that's what I want to see," says Christopher Wright. "And a trip to the sunken city of Atlantis is a must."

#### SPECTACULAR STEAMPUNK

The term may not have been coined until 1987, but Disney's 1954 adaptation of 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea is one of the early examples of steampunk on screen. **Tomas** Becks wants to see that retro Victorian-

industrial aesthetic in the new film too. "Definitely steampunk. There is not enough steampunk on the big or small screen."

#### MAKE NEMO UNLIKEABLE

He may be the enigmatic commander of one of science fiction's most magnificent vessels, but Nemo is a conflicted character - one driven by revenge - and you want to see that darkness reflected onscreen. "A big part of the book's tension comes from Nemo's increasingly hazardous drive for vengeance, don't skirt over that in the film for the sake of making it family-friendly," says Gyles Thomson.

#### BUT KEEP IT ALL AGES

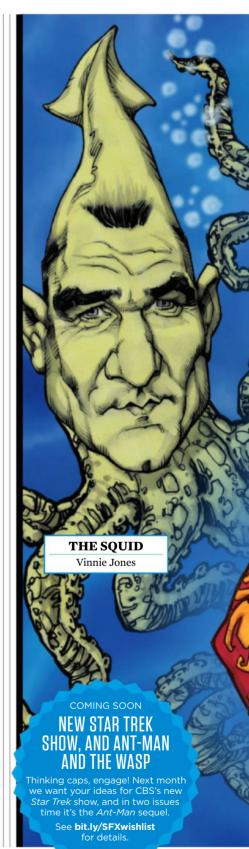
That said, Will Harper doesn't want the film to exclude younger viewers by going too dark. "20,000 Leagues was one of my favourite books growing up, and I'd love to show the film to my children, so how about a film that isn't just aimed at kids, but works for kids."

#### And that's not all they want... 🖖

- → nigel-o-brien Pierce Brosnan as Captain Nemo.
- → Robert Elliott Water!
- → Kevin Allport I'd like to see something ORIGINAL!
- → Keith Heeney So long as he gets Kirk Douglas singing about his tattoo to a sea lion he will be on to
- → FlangeBadger I'd like to see the Nautilus flushed down a toilet then they'd try to find Nemo and the film could be called Finding Nemo.
- → Scott H Would have been more interesting when it was David Fincher's 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea. Singer's will come across
- → Einez Crespo Hollywood: quit remaking and rebooting stuff.

- → Battle Startrek Rather Christopher Nolan took that on.
- → Alexandra The film following the book would be a good start.
- → Julie Evanson With an all-male main cast how about making one (or more) of the leads a woman, so it's not such a sausage-fest?
- → Scott Griffin Vinnie Jones mo-capping the giant squid.
- → Gavin S Verne wasn't writing a period piece, he was writing something futuristic, so make the Nautilus sleek and futuristic too.
- → David Jones Giant crabs!
- → The Red Dragon Have fun with the underwater world - make the ocean as mind-blowing as space. → Ali Close Never really liked The Mysterious Island, so end Nemo's

- story on 20,000 Leagues ambiguous note. And DON'T set up a seguel
- → Corine Duke Make it part of the DCU and have Aquaman show up to help fight the giant squid.
- > Thomas Lucas Giant squids, giant sharks, giant starfish, giant tuna... basically a film full of giant sea creatures.
- → Karl Banks Submarine combat like The Hunt For Red October. Sean Connery could come out retirement and take up residence on the Nautilus again.
- → Lena Blackburn Who cares about 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea - NEW STAR TREK TV SHOW. [Er, you're not really getting into the spirit of Wishlist - Ed]



# First Contact







# ANNO DRACULA

by Kim Newman, 1992

#### Author Jonathan Green loves visiting a world where Dracula won



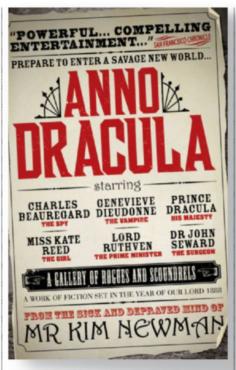
In the early 1990s, Kim Newman's Anno Dracula introduced me to a reimagined Victorian London, peopled with vampires, and a host of possibilities.

The novel's premise is both simple and brilliantly imaginative. Newman asks the question that all writers of speculative fiction ask - "What if...?" - but in the context of Bram Stoker's Dracula. Rather than being defeated by Van Helsing and his vampire hunters, Count Dracula escapes, and eventually marries the Widow of Windsor. With a vampire ruling beside Queen Victoria as Prince Consort, a host of undead emerge into the light, as it were, luxuriating in their new social status.

However, in 1888, the world's most infamous serial killer stalks the streets, murdering vampire prostitutes. It is during the hunt for this "Jack the Ripper" that Charles Beauregard and Geneviève Dieudonné find themselves embroiled in a plot to rid England of Dracula's malign influence, and we become mesmerised by the book's involved and fast-moving, action-packed plot.

While echoing elements of Dracula, the book is also a veritable Usborne Spotter's Guide of famous, and not-so-famous, vampires. We meet every kind of grave-leech, from Lord Ruthven (one of the first vampires to appear in English literature) through to the Chiang-Shih (or "Hopping Ghosts") of Chinese mythology.

Just as many real historical figures also feature - including Inspector Abberline, Elizabeth Báthory, Billy the Kid, John Merrick, and Bram Stoker himself - some having been given a vampiric makeover. In fact, the only significant characters in the novel that are



solely Newman's invention are the vampire Geneviève Dieudonné (who first appeared in the Warhammer novel Drachenfels) and the non-vampire Charles Beauregard, although the latter is an agent of Mycroft Holmes's beloved Diogenes Club.

And this is where the novel's power and influence really lie - not in reinventing the vampire bloodline of horror fiction, but in bringing metafiction to the fore as a literary device. This is the reason I cite *Anno Dracula* as

an influence upon the creation of my own Pax Britannia steampunk universe; it introduced me to the concept of a metafictional universe. with a story that shared characters from a host of different sources, both real and imagined.

Some consider Anno Dracula to be a steampunk novel, a supposition that both Newman and myself contest. But despite not being of the steampunk genre itself, the novel's influence on many alternate histories - many of them steam-powered - cannot be ignored.

As well as being a work of postmodernist horror, Anno Dracula can be described as a recursive fantasy. Certainly, having previously only been exposed to horror through James Herbert and Stephen King, it was a revelation to me of what a horror novel could be.

The book spawned a glut of sequels, which inserted Dracula and his descendants into other historical settings, with Newman populating the books with all manner of real historical figures as well as famous fictional ones. But for me, none of them were quite able to recreate the thrills of Anno Dracula. It is definitely a novel worth sinking your teeth into, and drinking deeply of its heady mix of action-adventure, political intrigue and, of course, vampires.

Jonathan Green's Alice's Nightmare In Wonderland - a dark steampunk reimagining of Lewis Carroll's classic children's novel in which the reader decides the course of the action - is available now from Snowbooks.

#### Like this? Try these!

#### THE BLOODY RED BARON by KIM NEWMAN (1995

The second Anno Dracula novel takes place during the First World War, but with the added horrors of werewolves. Adolf Hitler and Bela Lugosi are among those appearing.



#### THE HISTORIAN *by* ELIZABETH KOSTOVA (2005)

> Kostova's debut novel blends the history and folklore of the Wallachian prince Vlad Tepes with that of his fictional alter ego Count Dracula. Sony bought the film rights in 2007.



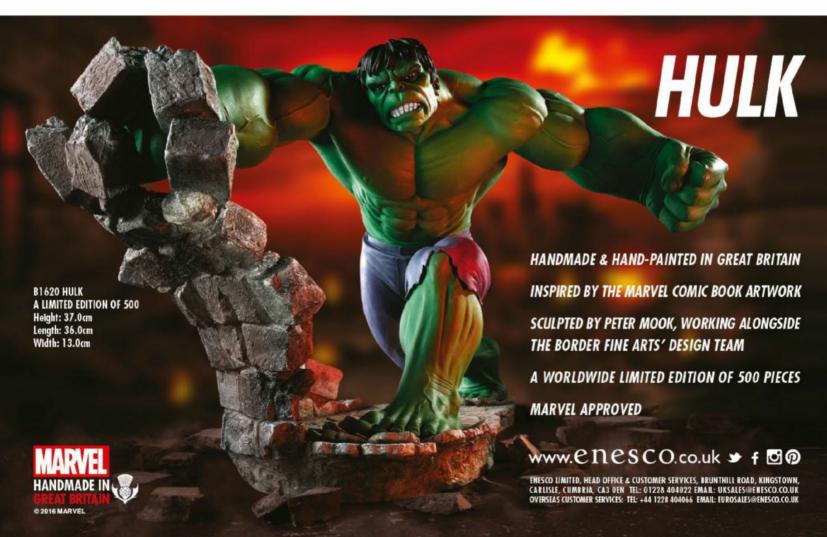
#### NEXT ISSUE 🛡

6 January), Charlie Fletcher, author of the Stoneheart trilogy, will be writing about Jeanette Winterson's 1998 novel *The Passion*, called "inventive and brilliant" by The Guardian.

If you're not familiar with the book, why not check it out before reading vhat a top author has to say about it?





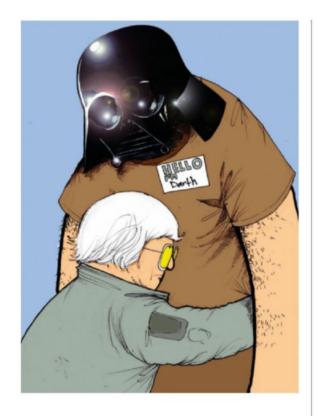


# **Opinion**



# UNTRUE NAMES

David Langford is tickled by some of SF's more peculiar monickers



"L RON HUBBARD INTRODUCED A CHARACTER CALLED ARSEBOGGER"

→ Illustration by Andy Watt

ob Shaw once explained his struggle to find the perfect name for the hero of his next SF novel. A name to express every nuance of the guy's personality and subtly imply his whole life story, so once Bob had hit on the one true name it was unnecessary to write the book. I don't know whether Neal Stephenson went through this agonising process with his novel *Snow Crash* before realising that the only possible name for the hero, or protagonist, was Hiro Protagonist.

Stephen R Donaldson is specially fond of fantasy monickers with over-the-top appropriateness. Not just Lord Foul, but a Gollumish figure with the gigglesome name Drool Rockworm and a noble seafaring giant called Saltheart Foamfollower. Conversely, I rather liked Jack Vance's SF tale *The Anome* with its mysterious, enigmatic character known as Ifness.

Elsewhere in SF we meet a dark invader called Darth Vader, ultimate superbeings called Ultans (Bob Shaw on a bad day), mysterious entities called Mysterons (*Captain Scarlet*), a large world called – by its alien denizens, who presumably know Latin – Terromagna (Captain WE Johns of Biggles fame), a naughty-boy character called Malenfant (Stephen Baxter) and tyrannical rulers called Tyranni (Isaac Asimov). One critic friend objected to Vonda McIntyre's story title "Of Mist, And Grass, And Sand" for being *too evocative*. Lovely title, he whinged. "Conjures up a whole landscape. And then you read the thing and Mist and Grass and Sand are just three bloody snakes." Sorry about the spoiler there.

There was a similar sense of vague letdown when I read Bruce Sterling's nifty novel *Schismatrix*. Obviously a schismatrix must be a woman who goes around causing schisms. After waiting for half the book for her to turn up and start schisming, I learned that in the jargon of this interplanetary future the whole fragmented Solar System was a *matrix* of *schisms*, geddit? Oh dearie me.

Some authors pick names that give typesetters a hard time. A favourite example from EE Smith's *Lensman* space operas is the occasionally mentioned planet Alsakan. Inevitably, every other reference got corrected to the more plausible "Alaskan". I found myself thinking that since this far-off world was known only for exports of Alsakan tobacco, it might have been wiser to call it Vriginia.

It was similarly easy to misread the name of the dire continent-wrecking Monster From The ID in Clive Barker's *Everville*, the Iad Uroboros. The capital I kept coming across as lower-case L, introducing a lad called Uroboros and leading to distracting thoughts that Uroboros Lad must be a reject from the Legion of Superheroes (because his only superpower was an amazing ability to bite his own bum). Just like that fiercely independent fellow Stand Alone Stan who was in fact the title of a fantasy novel by Phillip Mann...

Would-be comic names can lead us into even grimmer territory, as when L Ron Hubbard attempted biting satirical wit in his truly awful *Battlefield Earth* by introducing a character called Arsebogger...

Some authors definitely need the assistance of Baldrick in *Blackadder*, who of course suggested a cunning alternative when his master announced his terrorinspiring pseudonym: "I shall be known from now on... as The Black Vegetable!"

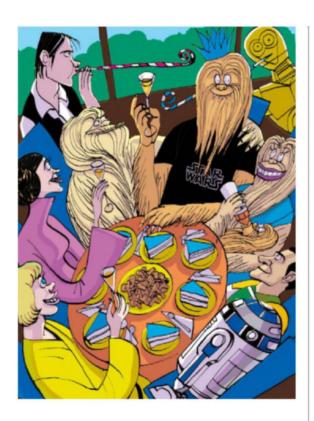
David Langford told them again and again that people would misread the middle letter of SFX, but did they ever listen?

# **Opinion**



# SPECIAL FORCE

Bonnie Burton dares to speak up for THAT Star Wars spin-off



"WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE LADY GAGA AS THE NEW QUEEN OF NABOO?"

othing says happy holidays more than seeing Chewbacca in a long red robe singing next to a not-so-sober Princess Leia, a confused Han Solo and Luke Skywalker and a couple of beeping droids.

While many Star Wars fans choose to forget the 97-minute travesty called The Star Wars Holiday Special, which debuted on American TV sets in 1978, I like to remember it more like a beloved time when campy variety shows made their way to a galaxy far, far away.

It's not like Darth Vader, the Skywalker clan and even C-3PO and R2-D2 didn't do guest appearances on everything from The Muppet Show to Donny & Marie variety shows back then. After all, Star Wars was a hot commodity, so seeing Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia pop up on the original Saturday Night Live in a skit wasn't that shocking.

When The Star Wars Holiday Special debuted in 1978, we were treated not only to an elaborate backstory about Chewbacca and his family on his home planet of Kashyyyk, but we also got our first look at bounty hunter Boba Fett in a cartoon during the show. Even Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia - all played by the movie's original actors - got in on the action.

The main storyline begins when we witness Han Solo and Chewbacca in the Millennium Falcon on their way back to Kashyyyk so they can celebrate the holiday Life Day, which is sort of like Christmas minus Santa. But on the way home, Han and Chewie are attacked by the Empire and are delayed. The rest of the story sort of goes downhill from there, but for me, it just starts getting good when we see an inside look at Chewbacca's family doing their daily chores and just being themselves. Think of it like The Only Way Is Essex, but for Wookiees.

The weird thing is, none of it is subtitled, so you have to guess what the Wookiees are saying to each other when washing the dishes or jamming out to Jefferson Starship hologram music videos.

While I might be the only fan left in this galaxy who loves the original Star Wars Holiday Special for its campiness and unusual characters, perhaps it's time to reboot the special? After all, if we can have a bunch of brand new movies, why not give the fans a fresh take on the kind of Star Wars variety special we deserve now?

The improved Star Wars Holiday Special can feature a mix of actual actors from the new movies, but also musical guests who best embrace the bizarre intergalactic nature of the franchise. Who wouldn't want to see Lady Gaga or Beyoncé made up to look like a droid goddess or the new queen of Naboo? Perhaps Stephen Fry could be a wise Yoda-like sage, though it would be nice to see him reinstate his cocktail-shaking prowess à la A Bit Of Fry And Laurie in the Cantina.

Costumes could be designed by Vivienne Westwood. Daft Punk could compose most of the music. Add a few eccentric comedians and actors like Noel Fielding and Alan Carr in the mix, and you'd have a geektastic hit on your hands.

I'm not the only one who waxes nostalgic when it comes to holiday specials! Shows like Doctor Who, Sherlock and even Top Gear have Christmas episodes, so why not Star Wars? If they need a snowy backdrop, they could stage the whole episode on the ice planet of Hoth. Imagine the fun Noel Fielding could have with a Wampa! •

Bonnie thinks Chewbacca could start a hair band with the Foo Fighters.

# **Opinion**



#### **NINETIES ARE THE NEW '80S**

If this year is anything to go by it looks as if the wheels on the remake machine might be beginning to slow, with the Poltergeist remake failing to do the numbers and the It remake stalling. Eighties nostalgia has been replaced by '90s nostalgia, with the Scream and Scream Queens TV shows hitting the small screen, and the excellent and under-appreciated *The Final* Girls going completely meta in a film that's steeped in '90s nostalgia for '80s nostalgia. 2013 and 2014 were all about '70s nostalgia of course, with decent *The Conjuring* and then the terrible Annabelle proving big hitters - they'll be back next year, with The Conjuring 2 on its way.

#### A-LIST IS THE NEW E-LIST

Ocould it be horror credibility stakes are on the up? In 2015 we saw plenty of proper superstars getting their horror on. Jessica Chastain and Tom Hiddleston in Crimson Peak James McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe in Victor Frankenstein, Jason Bateman and Rebecca Hall in The Gift, Ben Kingsley in Stonehearst Asylum, Arnold freaking Schwarzenegger in Maggie ... Oh and Nicolas Cage in something called Pay The Ghost. Or "pay off the tax bill" as you might want to call it.

#### THREE IS NOT THE CHARM

It was a year of atrocious third parts! Sharknado (Oh Hell No!) got a threequel, as did The Human Centipede, taking that franchise to new levels of disgustingness - a feat few thought possible. Then there was Insidious 3 which wasn't as bad as Insidious 2, but that's hardly something to astral project home about, while the need for a third round of rape-revenge in I Spit On Your Grave 3 is highly questionable. Twos weren't as bad, with Monsters 2 being a kind of action update of the road movie love story original, and Sinister 2 being a sort of not quite as good, not entirely logical retread.

#### WE LOST SOME TRUE GREATS

Sad times in the world of horror in 2015, which marked the passing of some true legends. The magnificent Christopher Lee embodiment of the original sexy vampire and the terrifying Lord Summerisle, passed, as did

A look back at the eventful year in horror that was 2015



one of my favourite horror directors, the mighty *Wes Craven*, a man who could lay claim to reinventing horror in the '70s, '80s and '90s. Surely all the nostalgia is just us missing Wes? We also lost the original Leatherface, Gunnar Hansen, unforgettable star of the greatest horror movie ever made; Betsy Palmer, who kicked off the slaughter in enduring franchise Friday The 13th as Mrs Voorhees: and former wrestler and star of John Carpenter's They Live Roddy Piper. We'll stay rowdy for you, Roddy.

#### INDIES RULE

Unsurprisingly though, my five favourite horrors of the year are all independent, all original stories and two of them aren't even in English. In at number five: White God

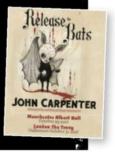
- Hungarian post apocalyptic nightmare with a subtext about oppression where a mistreated mutt leads a canine revolution to rival those pesky apes. Four: Spring - a beautiful low-fi Euro romance which also happens to be a monster movie. Mumblecore male wish fulfilment at its peak but nonetheless lovely. Three: A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night

- Iranian vampire movie with a wicked sense of humour that should be mandatory viewing for anyone who thinks Twilight a) is good or b) ruined vampires. Two: The Hallow

- properly scary Irish creature feature with a mythical bent. One: It Follows - original, clever, frightening tale of a "sexually transmitted ghost" whose victims are stalked to death by a relentless but difficult-to-identify shapeshifting presence. Freaky. Roll on 2016!

#### Dreadful things to do

Clear your diary next Halloween for Release The Bats, headlined by John Carpenter. He'll perform a retrospective of his horror themes plus his debut album and some nev stuff you ought to politely listen to. It's held at the Albert Hall, Manchester, on 29 October and the Troxy in London on 31 October. ww.atpfestival.com





#### FREESPEAK

WHERE WRITERS AND OPINIONS COLLIDE

#### Author **Charlie Jane Anders** is more in love with ET than ever



ecently I was sitting with some friends and their kids, and we wound up rewatching ET: The Extra-Terrestrial. I hadn't seen ET all the way through in years, and I was struck by how weird, yet captivating, it is. ET himself is an unsettling creation at first. We've seen so many photorealistic creatures now that his puppet features and sometimes-jerky movements make him look creepily unreal.

But after watching for a while, those huge expressive eyes, and the subtlety of ET's movements in the film's more intimate scenes started to work their magic.

His key characteristic is his vulnerability, along with his eagerness to connect with the children he meets. He's not a world-beating powerhouse, but a fragile creature whose only powers are a mild healing ability, and a few other odds and ends. Yet by the end of the movie, he's actually died and come back, and you're pretty much bound to be rooting for him to get rescued and escape from a weird, brutal world that wants to wreck him. ET still has it, even after all this time.

The thing is, when you try and list the best science fiction films of all time you start to notice a pattern. From The Day The Earth Stood Still to Ex\_Machina, the genre's best are very often the ones that make you see the "other" more vividly, and force you to sympathise with, or understand, a non-human perspective. From this standpoint, the ever-advancing march of visual effects can be seen as a series of small victories in making non-human creatures appear more believable or relatable. At the same time, the best sci-fi movies provide either a major dose of excitement, or a brush with wonder and a glimpse of something transcendent.

By those standards, ET is a high mark that hasn't been matched since 1982. Spielberg's crowning achievement is a film that leaves vou with no choice but to identify with an alien and clamour for him to reach the safety of his own kind - and the balance between pure excitement and wonder has seldom been so perfect.

Charlie Jane Anders is the author of All The Birds In The Sky, a science fiction AND fantasy novel coming in late January.



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Future Publishing Ltd Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 IUA Email sfx@futurenet.com Web www.gamesradar.com/sfx

#### EDITORIAL

Editor Richard Edwards, richard.edwards@futurenet.com Art Editor Jonathan Coates, jonathan.coates@futurenet.com
Deputy Art Editor Catherine Kirkpatrick, catherine.kirkpatrick@futurenet.com Production Editor Russell Lewin, russell.lewin@futurenet.com Features Editor Nick Setchfield, nick setchfield@futurenet.com e Entertainment Editor (Reviews) lan Berriman, ian.berriman@futurenet.com
Community Editor (News) Jordan Farley, jordan.farley@futurenet.com
US Editor (East Coast) Tara Bennett, usaeast@sfx.co.uk US Editor (West Coast) Joseph McCabe, usawest@sfx.co.uk

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Abolins-Farrell, Charlie Jane Anders, Sam Ashurst, Alan Barnes, Saxon Bullock, Bonnie Burton, Bryan Cairns, Paul Cemmick, Maria Colino, Sarah Dobbs, Penny Dreadful, Rhian Drinkwater, Paul Garner, Dave Golder, Jonathan Green, Kevin Harley, Andy Hartup, Tom Hawker, David Houghton, Steve Jarratt, Stephen Jewell, Paul Kirkley, David Langford, Miriam McDonald, Jayne Nelson, James Nouch, Steve O'Brien, Andrew Osmond, Miriam McDonald, Jayne Nelson, James Nouch, Steve O'Brien, Andrew Osmond, Eddie Robson, Bridie Roman, Will Salmon, Owen Van Spall, Alex Thomas, Andy Watt, James White, Josh Winning, Jonathan Wright

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Screenings Editor Matthew Leyland News Editor Matt Maytum Operations Editor Alex Cox Art Editor Mike Brennan Deputy Art Editor Megan Davis
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Photography Olly Curtis, Will Ireland

#### ADVERTISING

Account Director Adrian Hill, 01225 442244, adrian.hill@futurenet.com Advertising Manager Michael Pyatt, michael.pyatt@futurenet.com
Advertising Director Andrew Church, andrew.church@futurenet.com
Commercial Sales Director Clare Dove, clare.dove@futurenet.com

#### MARKETING

Group Marketing Manager Laura Driffield, laura.driffield@futurenet.com Marketing Manager Kristianne Stanton, kristianne.stanton@futurenet.com Marketing Executive Emma Clapp, emma.clapp@futurenet.com

#### PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

duction Controller Frances Twentyman, frances.twentyman@futurenet.com
Production Manager Mark Constance, mark.constance@futurenet.com Printed in the UK by William Gibbons & Sons on behalf of Euture Printed in the Ox by William Globons & Sons on behalf of Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London ECTA 9PT Tel 020 7429 4 Overseas distribution by Seymour International

#### CIRCULATION

**Trade Marketing Manager** Michelle Brock, 020 7429 3683, michelle.brock@seymour.co.uk

#### LICENSING

International Director Matt Ellis, matt.ellis@futurenet.com Tel +44 (0)1225 442244

#### THE SENIOR PARTNERS Group Editor-In-Chief Dave Bradle

Group Art Director Graham Dalzell Deputy Group Art Director Mark Wynne Head of Content & Marketing, Film, Music and Games Declan Gough
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"I'm going to find something in my house that needs screwing"



Doctor Who is future-proof, says Steven Moffat. But is he? The showrunner tells Nick Setchfield about this year's special, next year's new beginning and the pain of "clickbaiting monsters"...

# CHRISTMAS

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teven Moffat sips a Coke and contemplates this year's Doctor Who Christmas special, the sixth he's placed beneath the nation's tree. Is the festive season the gift that keeps on giving for a Time Lord, asks SFX, or is it a struggle to find vet another frosty, tinsel-

hearted tale to tell?

"I didn't really bother this year to come up with a seasonal angle," the showrunner confesses with a smile. "It's frontloaded with a lot of Christmas imagery: Christmas Day, TARDIS covered in icicles, a snowy street, Christmas lights. But then once we get into the action you sort of forget that it's Christmas. It's Christmas in the sense that it's a fast-moving comedy romp Doctor Who."

By all accounts it's officially more of a hoot than the Queen's Speech, teaming Peter Capaldi's Doctor with spoilershushing old flame River Song while finding room for Brit comedy stars Matt Lucas and Greg Davies. Moffat has more on his mind than this Christmas gift, though. He's here to unwrap the future of television, the future of *Doctor* Who and his own future as the man who holds the TARDIS kev...



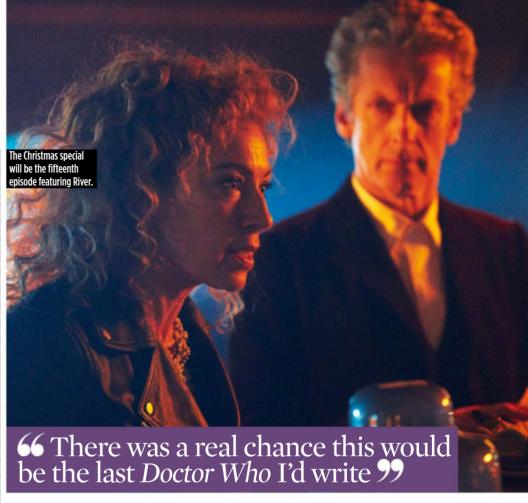




#### You've paired River Song with Peter's Doctor. Did you always intend to put the two of them together or did you genuinely think her story was done?

I pretty much thought we were finished with River but I always loved writing her. It's quite hard not to write her anymore. I was very tired when I came to write this. I thought there was a real chance that this would be the last Doctor Who I'd ever write. I thought, "Oh, River would cheer me up. And if it cheers me up maybe it'll cheer other people up." That perked me up and also the idea of the Doctor meeting River when this is the unlicensed regeneration cycle. River doesn't know it's him for quite a long time so that's quite a lot of fun. Imagine turning up and meeting your wife and your wife doesn't know it's you! How does she behave? There are many hints throughout the time they've known each other that she doesn't behave as impeccably when he's not looking. So this is full-on River Song.

Can you keep River's timeline in your head? I did have to go back and bone up on a



number of elements - you'll be able to tell which ones when you see it. It actually slots in shortly after "The Angels Take Manhattan" from her point of view, and we make that explicit in the show, for people who are taking notes! It's not as hard as the dialogue delights in making it seem. We see it in the wrong order but you can put it in the right order quite easily. You have to keep these things functioning in the moment. What do people remember? Slightly more than you think they will, and less than you would wish that they would.

#### So you came close to not carrying on with Doctor Who?

When I was first asked how many years I wanted to do it for I said three. And I was quite emphatic that I'd only do three. So why am I still here? I think there was a blurring - I did three years and then there was "The Day Of The Doctor" and before you know it you're planning a regeneration and you think hang on, I've just cast somebody else, what's going on? And also the fact that I love the show. I thought, I suppose - and I now realise that this



will never happen - that I would become tired of it or tired by it. And I'm not tired of it. I find it as exciting and as challenging and as limitless as I ever did, if not more so. The more you get to grips with what it can do the more things you think you haven't done yet.

#### You said you were tired by the time you came to write this...

I find it awesomely knackering every year - by the end of the series I'm quite mad, we all are. I left a note for myself this time saving. "Remember not to trust your own judgement by around episode 12 you're probably mental." Not in terms of the art of it but in terms of worrying about things. All sense of proportion has gone by then. But I'm not five years more tired than I was five years ago. It just doesn't work that way. So I know I'm not going to leave because I find the show boring, or that I hate it. It'll be because I'm not doing other things. Waiting for myself to drop off the perch in an elegant and natural way isn't working for me. It's going to have to be a decision to go. And a decision, indeed, to stay. But after the first three years it's a conversation every year. And I do say to the BBC, "I'm not going to take offence or be upset or go in a huff if you say it's time to bring somebody else in." I really won't. Just give me time so we can make it a good transition.

There's so much chatter about the future of Doctor Who, about ratings, about schedules. More than any other TV programme gets. More than any other hit television show our

imminent cancellation is discussed...



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Fortunately you don't have to. We disappear into a bubble for months on end - people do talk about us but we're not bothering to keep when we're just making the show. It only matters to us while we're transmitting. I entertain the fantasy that it would be much more fun if we just made it and didn't show it. You could just make it, it would be lovely, and put it in your garage, and visitors could see it now and then. That would be quite pleasant.

But you have to do all this bit. You have to show it to people.

#### Does it get to you?

Clickbaiting monsters make up all sorts of nonsense about you just to try and get the words Doctor Who and. god help me, Sherlock into the same headline, saying they're both doomed and made by evil people. That means you get a lot of clicks on a website. I'll be honest, I find that quite grinding. I mean, everybody knows what the consolidated figures are. They're a little bit down because we're scheduled a bit later than we should be. Everyone knows this. Internationally we're doing colossal business. We're one of the biggest money-spinners in British television. Everyone knows we're in no danger whatsoever and by any standard - by any standard at all - it is a huge hit. And yet you walk into this wall of deceitful nastiness about it crashing and burning. It isn't. I don't think it impacts on anything in the real world. It might impact on the quality of my day, which matters a lot more to me than it does to anyone else.

Television's clearly changing. Given things like the Netflix model, where 12 episodes drop at once, can you see Doctor Who evolving? Is it future-proof?

Reminded of the

robots in "Dinosaurs

On A Spaceship"?



#### THE TWELFTH DAY

PETER CAPALDI decks the TARDIS halls

#### What can you tell us about this special?

It's festive, it's light-hearted, it's a big, rollicking comic edge to it. The Doctor is sought out to perform a task, to help a king. But he's not quite up this is all in a very futuristic way, with flying saucers and robots. So it touches on a lot of Christmas themes, but remains very Doctor Who-ish.

#### We've seen a warmer and more open Doctor this year. Was that driven by the scripts or vou personally?

I think both. When you come into it in the first season, you're sort of exploring and trying to find out who this particular Doctor is, and that carries on. We did feel he's a little more used to himself now. So let's warm him up a little. Let's see him have some fun. Because I always felt he actually loved the position he was in, that it was really exciting to travel through time and space

#### Do you know where you want to take him next?

There are so many colours and you want to telling you how this person came to be more at ease. But then the events of the programme crush him. He was right. He was right to be distant and suspicious. Being cheerful and warm and funny is all very well but the dark still comes. I think that's an interesting place to be going into. I think he will be more committed to his crusade.

#### Did you get any Doctor Who Christmas presents as a kid?

There wasn't much Doctor Who merchandise when I was growing up. I grew up during the Dalekmania period. My parents, god bless them, bought me a Dalek costume. The box had a much more convincing illustration of what it was supposed to be. When you opened the box it was a dome with like a plastic skirt, with circles drawn on it, and with two holes that you stuck your hands through. It was a kind of abstract version of a Dalek. My mother always used to buy me the Doctor Who annual. In fact she did until quite recently as a sort of joke! Which is why I have this huge collection of Doctor Who annuals... Nick Setchfield



# 66 I am thinking quite hard about a radically different way of kicking off 99

• Yeah, I think it is future-proof. But what's interesting - and this is just me speculating, like any other media tosser - is that the part of the audience that is going to be of interest in the new world of television isn't the casual viewer. It's the dedicated viewer. Game Of Thrones doesn't need to be the highest rated show in the world. It needs to be the most talked about and most lucrative show in the world. What I think is interesting about Doctor Who is even if the promotion isn't quite on form, even if we're scheduled around rugby and put on too late, it still gets those people. If we release a minisode on YouTube it'll get four or five million viewers. I think four or five million people would watch it if you put it on at four in the morning. That kind of viewer is more important than the casual viewers. I think that the era of the casual viewer driving television might be coming to an end.

# We've just lost Clara, who was almost the platonic ideal of what a *Who* companion should be. How do you follow her?

• By somebody who doesn't ever think that they should be a *Doctor Who* companion. That works as well. The word we inevitably use is companion and it's completely wrong.

Structurally, within the show, the Doctor is the companion. It's always her story. And it always has been. The origin shows of *Doctor Who*, "An

Unearthly Child" and "Rose", focus entirely on the companion character. They get more

the companion character. They get more screentime, more lines and you know more

about them. So it's starting the story again from a different point of view. And when you change the point of view character you change the flavour and style of your show. You also get a glorious thing – you can absolutely legitimately call it chapter one. You can start here. This person is going to walk with you into the Doctor's life, and you're going to discover that blue box is bigger on the inside. He's got two hearts. Maybe one day you'll discover he can change his face. You're going to see that all again. You can call that repetitive if you like but when have we ever got tired of James Bond introducing himself?

#### So that's where your head is right now?

• And in Sherlock! Yes, I am thinking quite hard actually about a quite radically different way of kicking off. Because you can approach it from any angle. You can come diving in. We know where we're going to end up. We're going to be inside the blue box and it's going to take off and



we're going to go everywhere in the universe. But what road we take to get there will define the new flavour of the show.

## Where do you think you want to take the Doctor next year – and where does Peter want to take the character?

• We haven't sat and had that discussion yet because we're still reeling after the end of last year. We discussed it a lot between series eight and series nine. Peter was very articulate and clear about what he wanted to do. We'd left "Am I a good man?" behind and "Am I the Doctor?" behind. I remember he wanted the electric guitar. The thing he said to me that was music to my ears was "I don't want to play the Twelfth Doctor. I feel as though I've been playing the Twelfth Doctor. All of him." It always happens in the second series, with every Doctor. That's the moment where he took it over, where it was just him. There was no other.

#### This year's Victorian era Sherlock special is a format buster. Could you do a Doctor Who special that was equally unexpected?

O What, the continuation of the Peter Cushing movies? That's not half-bad... I quite like it [laughs]! The answer is you can do anything you like. It does strike me as quite funny to do a *Doctor Who* Christmas special which is just the movie version of *Doctor Who* − Hollywood got hold of the true story of the Time Lord and made a slightly distorted version [laughs]! Yes, you could. Possibly people would be disappointed... oh, I don't know. If it was funny it would be good!

The Doctor Who Christmas special is on BBC One on Christmas Day.

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# ALEX KINGSTON

River Song returns to the Doctor's life, just in time for Christmas...

Words by Nick Setchfield /// Photography by Simon Ridgway

oday it's hard to tell where Alex Kingston ends and River Song begins. And no, it's not just because there's a vortex manipulator strapped to her wrist as she meets SFX in a spare BBC boardroom in Cardiff. An electric tumble of ringlets in a black biker jacket, she smiles broadly, laughs hugely and teases secrets mercilessly. Frankly she packs more sauce than a Lea & Perrins factory. Kingston returns as the timeline-hopping, linearity-defying archaeologist and uber-flirt in this year's Doctor Who Christmas special, an adventure that unites her with Twelfth Doctor Peter Capaldi. "I never imagined that this character had any longevity at all," she tells us, clearly delighted to be back in the Time Lord's life. "I thought she was just a beautifully written character within a twoepisode story arc. But Steven [Moffat] had other intentions. I feel extremely fortunate that she keeps being revived and keeps being inserted into episodes."

#### Does it feel like you're coming on to a different show with a different Doctor?

David to Matt. Essentially my character is the same, so there's continuity there. The fun is interacting with someone who's essentially the same man but in a different skin and with a different energy. It took me a few days to gauge Peter but without giving away too much that's also part of the story as well. So in a sense learning and becoming more familiar with Peter's energy and who Peter has created as the Doctor is not only part of my learning journey but it's also been River's as well. So the two have kind of gone hand in hand, which is quite fun.

Can you personally keep track of River's timeline?
No, in a word [laughs]!

Did you have to bone up on it all before playing her again?

No, I didn't have to do that... This is definitely later, but it's also earlier!

Russell T Davies described you and Peter Capaldi together as a "sex storm". Is that what we're going to see on Christmas Day?

• Well, it's a family show – but there have been moments on set where we've started to call it *Doctor Blue* [laughs]! Say no more!

#### Does she flirt with the Doctor from the outset?

• She doesn't know who he is! She has a husband! The script is fantastic and if anything I'd say the fast-paced comedy and the interaction between the two is like the old screwball movies, like Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn.

#### If you were to get a call saying they wanted River as a full-time companion, would you do it?

○ I don't know whether they would do that. In a sense I think the beauty of a character like River Song – and I think what the fans love – is that she will come in for an adventure but then she goes off again. One can then spend one's time imagining what she does when she's not with the Doctor. River's already established, so why not keep her in that respect and then just bring in a new companion because then you've got more people to interact with and to play with

#### Do you think she'd work as a spin-off show?

◆ After the 9 o'clock watershed? Yeah [saucily]! With Captain Jack! I love playing River Song and any opportunity to play her I will always say yes, but I know that eventually there'll be a point where we'll be finished with that character – otherwise you'll be seeing me with a zimmer frame saying "Hello sweetie!", and I'm not sure that will go down so well... Maybe it will!

#### Is there a Doctor from the show's past you'd love to see River flirt with?

• It would probably have to be Jon Pertwee! Because he was quite naughty, wasn't he? He had quite a twinkle. I think I'd probably give William Hartnell a heart attack! Best to leave him alone. But as I say, they're all the same man. Essentially the spirit is the same, so I'm getting my fair share! Recently there's been chat about the Doctor changing sex. Is that a role you could ever see yourself playing?

OI don't think I would take it on because I'm already River. I don't think she could be the Doctor. I would imagine that if anything the Doctor might be of a different race than gender. I can't imagine, personally, the Doctor being a different gender. I just think that too many men have played that role. If one goes back, historically, it's really been a little boy's show and girls have been brought onto it. Certainly when I was a girl I loved it as well but I don't know... I hope that women aren't going to hate me for this but I do think that the Doctor has to be a guy, actually. I do. Well, it would be very interesting for River if it was a woman [laughs]... ●

Doctor Who's Christmas special will be shown on BBC One.

#### Biodata 😻

#### Occupation

→ Actress Born

→ 11 March 1963

#### From

→ Epsom, Surrey Greatest hits

→ Moll Flanders, ER, Lost In Austen, Arrow

#### Random fact

→ Alex Kingston stars alongside Eighth Doctor Paul McGann in Big Finish audio drama The Diary Of River Song in 2016.



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# REDDWARF

They smoked us a kipper and they're back for breakfast!



Having successfully negotiated a couple of lengthy hiatuses and the move to a new channel, Rimmer, Lister, Kryten and the Cat are riding high on the wave of 2012's excellent series X, and

back for not one but two new six-part series on Dave. The 12 episodes that'll be shared between Red Dwarf XI (due in 2016) and Red Dwarf XII (2017) are shooting either side of Christmas.

"There was an argument from UKTV that things would be cheaper if we did 12 because costs and things could be spread across both series," explains writer, director and Red Dwarf co-creator Doug Naylor, speaking to SFX mere days before the first live studio recording in mid-November. "I found myself saying yes,

okay, there is time to do that, but then when you've written seven or eight you go, 'Oh my god, why didn't I say it had to be six!

Naylor says the new series episodes will pick up soon after series X left off, but won't get too hung up on serialisation. "They're all selfcontained episodes. There are [overall] story things but not a real arc because we don't know yet which will be the six episodes that go out in XI and which will go out in XII."

So are there any dangling plot threads from the previous 10 series that the new episodes will pick up? "There are various things, but you've got to be careful that you're not just appealing to the die-hards," Naylor says. "There were areas we looked at very hard and thought, 'God, you're going to have to spend half the show explaining the backstory before you can get on with the comedy,' so we've tried not to do that, so it's accessible

to both hardcore fans and more casual viewers as well."

But surely the revelation that Rimmer's dad was actually the gardener must have changed things slightly?

"It's made no difference to him whatsoever," Naylor laughs, "aside from him feeling slightly confused for a bit. But then remarkably he just returns to exactly who he was before.

"In a sitcom you don't want the characters to mature, you don't want them to learn anything, because when you have growth, it generally means they're not as funny because they're usually funniest when they're at their most flawed. Most sitcoms don't survive as many series as we've done and I think one of the reasons is we haven't allowed the characters to mature much. Because they're still hugely emotionally damaged, we've managed to survive!" Richard Edwards





# PREACHER

God? It's me, Jesse... Get set for the road trip of horror



While many still mourn the cancellation of Constantine, another adaptation of a DC/ Vertigo supernatural horror hit is making its way to TV in the form of Preacher.

Based on the fan fave comic book by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, the show chronicles the adventures of Jesse Custer, the titular holy man (played by Dominic Cooper), who finds himself possessed by a most unholy creature. With his hard-nosed ex-girlfriend Tulip O'Hare (Agents Of SHIELD's Ruth Negga) and best friend Cassidy (an Irish vampire played by Misfits' Joe Gilgun), Jesse makes his way across an unforgiving America on a quest to find God.

Producer Seth Rogen directs the pilot with regular writing partner Evan Goldberg. In the States, Preacher will screen on AMC, the network responsible for The Walking Dead.

"Garth Ennis's Preacher is, above all, about great characters - something we look for in all of our series," says AMC president Joel Stillerman. "The fact that it is also darkly funny, has some great supernatural elements and takes us on an incredible adventure is just the icing on the cake." Joseph McCabe





## GAME OF THRONES

The brutal fantasy series ventures into uncharted territory



**Heading into season** six it isn't just Jon Snow who knows nothing - Game Of Thrones viewers are now equally oblivious. HBO's adaptation of George RR Martin's Song Of Ice And Fire

series exhausted its published source material at the end of season five meaning, for the first time, even novel readers haven't the foggiest about what's coming up.

Of course, with GRRM closely involved you can expect the show's trajectory to more or less mirror upcoming novel The Winds Of Winter. And there are still bits to catch up on from AFeast For Crows and A Dance With Dragons.

New cast members include Ian McShane, who will appear in a single episode and bring "somebody back that you think you're never going to see again". Bran, Hodor et al will return North of the Wall after taking a year off. Max von Sydow has been cast as the Three-Eyed Raven, we'll meet the rest of Sam's family, and the introduction of Euron Greyjoy hints that we'll be seeing plenty of the Iron Islands.

But what of Jon Snow? The Lord Commander was betrayed and seemingly slain by his own Night's Watch brothers in the season five finale, but with Red Priestess Melisandre conveniently returning to Castle Black hours earlier and actor Kit Harington spotted filming in Belfast it's safe to assume that we haven't seen the last of Ned Stark's bastard... Jordan Farley





The creator of *The Walking Dead* exorcises his demons...



Based on the comic book by Robert Kirkman, Outcast is poised to do for demonic possession what the writerproducer's The Walking Dead did for zombies. Life On

Mars' Philip Glenister plays Reverend Anderson, a man of the cloth who "specialises in exorcisms".

"I suppose he's the big fish in a small pond in many respects," Glenister tells *SFX*. "He has flaws. He's not your average reverend – he likes a drink, he smokes, he swears quite a lot. We find out that these exorcisms that he's been carrying out over the years slowly are coming back to haunt him, since the arrival of Kyle."

Glenister says the relationship between Anderson and his supernaturally gifted new partner – played by *Gone Girl*'s Patrick Fugit – is key to the show.

"Kyle's the new kid on the block. I always say it's like *Rocky* – I'm kind of the Burgess Meredith character, the trainer. I start resenting Kyle a little bit, because his exorcisms seem to work. I realise I need him in my life, and start resenting him at the same time. That's the clash or the conflict between the two of them." Joseph McCabe





# LEGENDS OF TOMORROW

Team players! DC's small screen universe explodes...



After overseeing
Arrow, executive
producer Marc
Guggenheim is now
responsible for the
most ambitious
superhero TV project
yet: Legends Of
Tomorrow. Featuring

an entire team of heroes and villains, the show provides limitless opportunities to explore the DC Universe.

"What's fun about the concept,"
Guggenheim tells SFX, "is because it's a team concept we can rotate people in and out depending upon what the actors want to do and what our storytelling needs are. It's not going to be an anthology like American Horror Story. But it's going to have different ideas. Time travel is the idea behind season one. The next arc will have its own big idea behind it."

At the centre of season one's time travel is the man who brings the team together, Rip Hunter, played by Arthur Darvill, no stranger to the subject matter given his stint in *Doctor Who*. Will *Legends* offer in-jokes for Whovians?

"We're looking for the right in-joke," laughs Guggenheim. "But it's Arthur Darvill in a time travel show – it's low-hanging fruit. We didn't want him to be Rory and we didn't want him to be the Doctor. We wanted him to craft his own character, and he really has." Joseph McCabe





1 It's war! Yes, prepare for total vigilante meltdown on the mean streets of Hell's Kitchen. The Walking Dead's Jon Bernthal will play Frank Castle aka the Punisher, Marvel's merciless, skull-chested antihero. New showrunner Marco Ramirez frames season two as essentially "Daredevil Vs The Punisher" so expect plenty of conflict between Castle's kill-spree mentality and Matt Murdock's marginally more liberal approach to urban renewal...

- 2 Another iconic character from the comic book pantheon debuts in season two. France's Elodie Yung plays sai-wielding assassin and uneasy love interest Elektra Natchios, introduced as a mysterious figure from Matt's past. Word is that Elektra's hired by criminal cabal the Hand to take down Daredevil after his defeat of Wilson Fisk.
- **3** Need a fix of sardonic advice from a lethal blind man? You're in luck. Scott Glenn returns for three episodes as Matt's mentor Stick.
- Marco Ramirez is promoted to showrunner alongside fellow season one veteran Doug Petrie. The pair replace the departing Steven DeKnight.
- The first season explored the street-level reality of the Marvel Universe but season two will edge even deeper into the shadows. "With the Punisher and Elektra we get to test it and take it further and darker," promises Petrie. Nick Setchfield



# HOUDINI AND DOYLE

Solving supernatural crime with history's secret team-up...



Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and escapologist Harry Houdini did meet in real life. They had a shared interest in spiritualism: Doyle wanted to believe

communication with the dead was possible; Houdini wanted to debunk it. They did not, however, become the Mulder and Scully of their day, investigating crimes with a spooky element. Which is a shameful omission from history that new ITV Encore series *Houdini And Doyle* will put right.

From the creator of *House*, David Shore, the series stars Stephen Mangan (*Dirk Gently*) as Doyle and Michael Weston (*House*) as Houdini, and could prove to be the perfect antidote to buddy cop shows.

"A ghost is accused of killing nuns in a convent," says Mangan. "So Doyle goes to the police – because this is right up his street – to see if he can be part of the investigation."

"I want to make sure that he's not going to propagate lies and take advantage of people naive enough to believe in this stuff," says Weston of Houdini. "We confound each other and annoy each other, yet we also really need each other to feel like we've proved our argument."

Mangan smiles. "Plus you're a confident and brash American and I'm an emotionally constipated Brit..." Dave Golder



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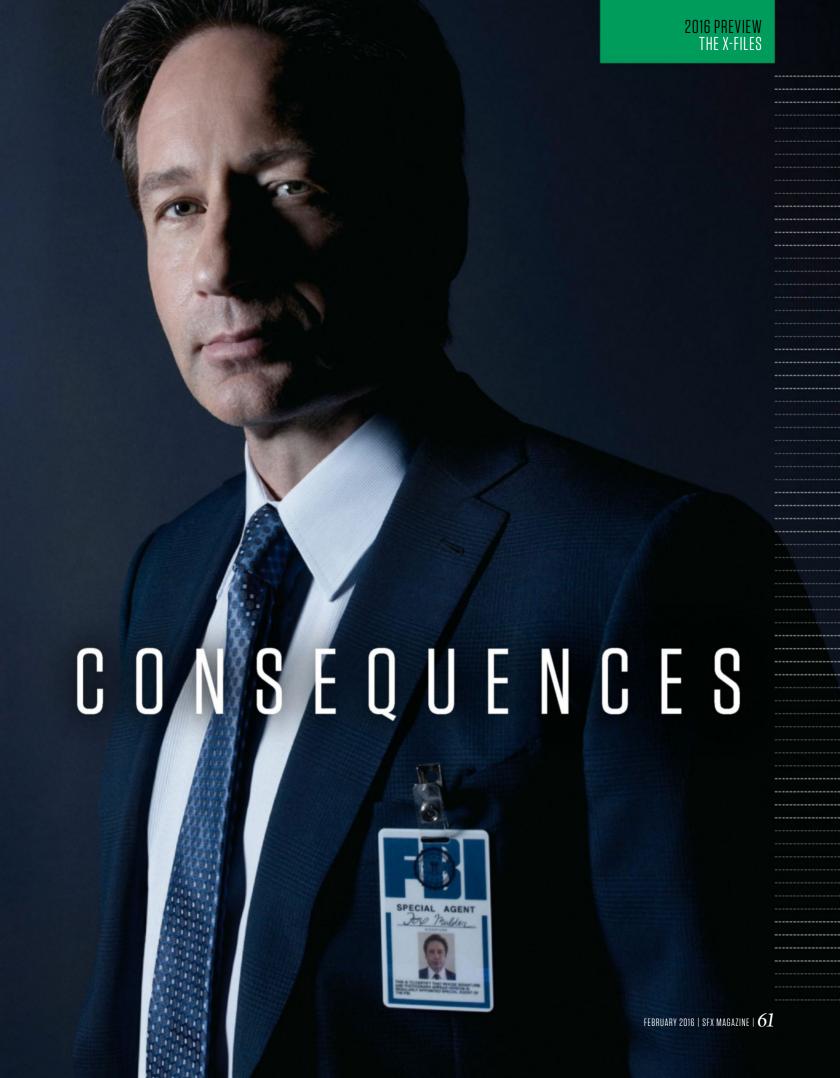
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rawl the internet in 2015 and you'll find no shortage of stories to fuel the paranoid: governments accessing our personal data: the drones that

will soon be hovering in our personal space; conspiracy theorists on overdrive about the one-percenters ruling the globe. It feels like the kind of stuff you'd imagine Fox Mulder poring over in his cramped FBI office on his neverending quest to prove that the truth is still out there.

Except Mulder - and his brilliant but ever sceptical partner Dana Scully - have been off the conspiracy beat for close to a decade, The X-Files franchise lying dormant in popular culture.

Gone they may have been but creator/ executive producer Chris Carter assures SFX that The X-Files was certainly never forgotten. "I think about The X-Files almost every day," Carter admits. "Whenever I pick up the paper, I see an X-Files story. It's in my blood. I've been doing this for a third of my life so it's certainly a part of me. "

That doesn't mean Carter didn't appreciate the break. Charting the mythology for 202 hours' worth of episodic stories, plus spin-off series (The Lone Gunmen, Millennium) and two movies burned him out on the franchise.

"I took some time off," Carter says of his low profile status in recent years. "I think it's given me distance and clarity and certainly a renewed interest in telling X-Files stories."

Carter found himself unexpectedly blowing dust off The X-Files this year after the stars and the schedules aligned with Fox's intention to revive the franchise on TV. "When I got a phone call saying the actors were interested and would I be interested in coming back for a short series, my answer was immediately, 'Yes!" Carter laughs. "If David and Gillian were interested, I was interested."

Carter assembled former series writers James Wong, Glen Morgan and Darin Morgan to craft the new series. "We originally intended to do eight episodes but we got cut to six so we had to look at things differently. It meant we couldn't reach out to some of the people who helped us before. But to do a short series is really the way to come back at this time. It's now what people are doing and I think it gives you a chance to focus in an interesting way."

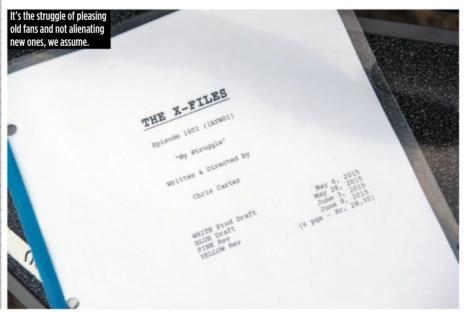
It's been eight years since cinematic entry The X-Files: I Want To Believe, the point at which Carter says the show's canon went into stasis. And while there is a current The X-Files Season 10 comic series from IDW, of which Carter is quick to praise its editor Joe Harris, he qualifies those stories as "excellent fan fiction".



Carter says the new event series follows the narrative left suspended when the ninth season ended in 2002. "We're continuing some mythology from that place but we're also continuing the storytelling in terms of Mulder and Scully's relationship as it relates directly to what we know about them in the second movie." In that film, the duo, who had a

child together, were on rockier ground, relationship-wise, a continuing theme as the miniseries opens.

While some fans will be less than thrilled to learn their power couple is not together, Carter says continuing to explore how these two diametrically opposed personalities have remained in each other's orbit is true to the





show's original premise. "They struggled with their relationship originally," Carter reiterates. "Through the second movie, they came together, which was absolutely natural. But they found themselves feeling that it couldn't work in that way. If Scully holds by her professional pursuits and Mulder by his, it would pull them apart."





#### 66 There is an idea that Mulder has suffered for his singular pursuits ">>

That push and pull is even reflected in the title of the first episode of the revived series, "My Struggle". Carter admits a large part of the narrative came from just "imagining where Mulder and Scully are, not only in their relationship but their professional lives. Mulder lives a hermit life, probably hand to mouth, maybe even with some help from Scully. I think there is an idea that Mulder has suffered for his singular pursuits."

Meanwhile Scully is no longer an FBI agent and has returned to her medical career. "She is a serious person so she takes her career seriously," Carter explains. "But I think deep down she probably, unconsciously, desires a reason to be pulled back [to Mulder]. For her. as a scientist, [being a part of the X-Files] was

an amazing experience and a challenge to her. In the hospital and in medicine, she now has an opportunity to do both things.

"They have an emotional connection," Carter continues. "They share something. In episode four he takes her hand and it's a loaded moment. So I feel it's given us something new to explore considering we will have been doing this for 22 years."

#### THREE'S COMPANY

The catalyst for the pair to come back together turns out to be conservative media pundit Tad O'Malley, played by Joel McHale. O'Malley is a younger, more energised and better financed version of Mulder who comes calling to enlist Fox's help in exposing the repeated abduction experiences of a young woman named Sveta (Annet Mahendru).

Carter reveals that O'Malley represents someone who credibly brings Mulder's life work into the present. "I think it's a reflection of the times we live in," he says of the heightened conspiratorial rhetoric that O'Malley broadcasts to his fervent followers.

"We live in a Citizenfour world," Carter adds, referencing the documentary on NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden. "For years Mulder has been looking in one direction and [via O'Malley], he is all of a sudden pulled in another direction which makes absolute sense to him. He starts putting the pieces together in an interesting way. Mulder feels as though he's been deceived yet it energises him. He's been depressed and it lifts him out of his melancholy."

Filming of the new episodes took place from June to September back in the show's familiar stomping grounds of Vancouver, British Columbia, where the early TV seasons and the second film were produced. Carter himself wrote and directed episodes one,



four and six and says the first day back on the set seems to have already attained semi-mythic status judging by the number of times he's been asked about it

"People want to know what that first day was like and what that first moment on the set was like. I have to say it was just a day of hard work as we hit the ground running. That being said, I went and visited David in the costume fittings and that was like old times. And then in hair and make-up with Gillian as a blonde and all of a sudden she is a redhead again. With everyone it was about slowly putting the layers and the shoes, literally, back on again. They were all very familiar things to us but across a span of time this great was its own special thrill."

#### **BACK TO BASICS**

Carter does admit that getting to direct his stars again was particularly resonant for him: "Something that struck me was that David and Gillian have done so much work since *The X-Files* and they bring that wisdom. I think there was a moment in directing them that we had to go back and find those bearings again. It wasn't hard. They both have clear ideas of the characters but there is so much water under the bridge. Finding [the characters] was comfortable but sometimes there may have been a mystery or two," he laughs.

Nostalgia and the prevailing cultural decree that everything old should be new again are big reasons why *The X-Files* is getting the chance to exist again in its original medium. A long-time success in the home video market and now on streaming services that cater to the binge-watching generation, the show's return has been crafted with a mandate to service both old and new audiences.

"The first episode is a very easy entrance for almost anyone, especially in that opening sequence," Carter says of "My Struggle". "We were mindful of the fact that we may have a new audience, but we were also mindful that the reason we are back is that we have a hardcore audience. We didn't want to beat them over the head with a prologue that was

insulting to them. So we walked a fine line and I hope we did it well."

Back in the day, *The X-Files* was the show that created its own category of TV: the hybrid series that balanced an intense mythology that played out over episodes throughout the season and standalones, or "monster of the week" stories, that were self-contained. Carter says they continue that model in their new run.

"We looked at the fact that we had six episodes and we thought what would be best for the show? What made the show? It was the combination of mythology and standalone episodes. It was my idea to bookend the show with mythology episodes and in between are episodic stories. However, I think you will find there is an arc for Mulder and Scully within the larger arc. There is an honesty to the characters and where they are, and what they are going through, that connects the new episodes."

As to whether these new episodes will make the show as big a phenomenon among Millennials as it was for the '90s generation, Carter says that's not something that keeps him up at night. "My objective is always the same: to tell great X-Files stories. That in and of itself is of absolute importance," he emphasises. "But we're living in a media world where the show is on Netflix. People can find it, and may have found it. I have people who come up to me that say they are fans of the show and they weren't even born when The X-Files was first on. I do think there is an opportunity to reach new people. But we are living with diminished network ratings so it's now up to Fox. If I've done my good work, it's up to Fox to find people who used to like it, and people who might like it."

And what if they do? Does Carter have a taste for more truth-chasing in the future? "It's in my blood," Carter emphasises again. "The way we end this series, we leave it open for more *X-Files* stories and that's a clear message."

The X-Files begins in the US on 24 January on Fox. UK broadcaster TBC. Look out for more on the show next issue.

# X THE UNKNOWN

Some dangling plot threads we'd like to see tied up in the new series...

#### **ALIEN COLONISATION**

→ When the show ended in 2002, we were led to believe that an alien force was going to invade and colonise dear old Earth on 22 December 2012. So when I Want To Believe hit cinemas in 2008, you'd have thought they'd have tackled that terrifying scenario, wouldn't you? Naw-huh. So what did happen to those extra-terrestrial property developers and their delightful, eyeball-coating Black Oil?



#### WILLIAM

In one of the new series trailers, there's a glimpse of a phone screen with the word "William" on there. For those who may have forgotten this rather important (!) plot point, Mulder and Scully had a son, named for Mulder's father, who Scully gave away in season nine. By our reckoning, the lad would be about 14 now. Is he the one calling up to say hi? And given his possibly alien origins (Scully was sterile until he came along), will he have any special powers?

#### **SUPERSOLDIERS**

For a while on the show, these guys were everywhere. Strong, remorseless and deadly, they went around killing folk for their alien masters and causing no end of trouble. So... what happened to them? Are they still alive? Are they still dangerous? Have they integrated into society as personal trainers, maybe?

#### SAMANTHA MULDER

The search for his sister was Mulder's life-long mission, so when her death was apparently explained away as her being the victim of a serial killer in season seven, it was a bit disappointing. However, there were later hints that Mulder didn't actually believe that explanation. So is Mulder still looking for her? Jayne Nelson



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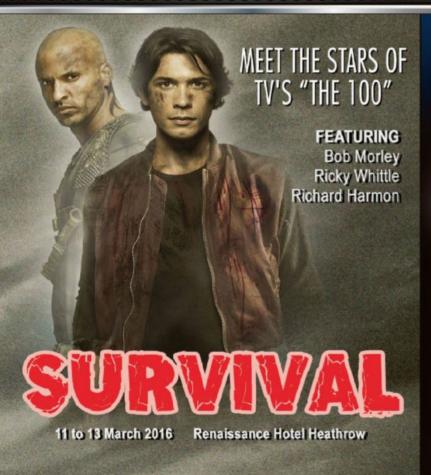
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# L.A. STORY



he jaded Los Angeles of the 1940s may have seen its fair share of trouble, from police corruption to mobster wars, but the City of Angels is about to

seriously rumble with the arrival of Peggy Carter.

The Strategic Scientific Reserve agent relocates from New York City to LA for a brand new mission in season two of Marvel's sparky, empowering period drama. Having spent most of season one battling against the suffocating gender bias of her male peers, Carter still managed to save the city from a potentially fatal gas attack and clear Howard Stark's name. Now a grudgingly respected field agent, she's ready to use her skills in a new town.

"At the end of last season Peggy put Steve Rogers [Captain America] to rest and part of the trope of coming to LA is reinventing yourself," executive producer/co-showrunner Michele Fazekas tells *SFX* about their heroine's motivations this season.

The show's creative team thought Carter rooting out hidden evils among the glitter of Golden Age Hollywood would be a perfect fit. "The nice thing about LA, when you think about noir films of the '40s, is that a lot of the famous ones feature the glamour of the city and the crime and grit and corruption of the city," Fazekas explains. "It's really impacted our story in a great way. It's been a rich ground to tell stories here."

The relocation has also given Atwell the chance to stretch herself. The writers say they aim to utilise their star's versatility even more

Agent Carter's off to Hollywood! Tara Bennett visits the LA set to get the key intel...

this season. "Hayley can almost do anything," Fazekas enthuses. "She's very funny. She can do physical comedy. She can do drama and anger."

Fellow executive producer/co-showrunner Chris Dingess is equally enthusiastic. "There's a confidence she brought to the character. Peggy is such a strong, heroic character and so much of that has to do with Hayley. There's a confidence to every move she's making so even when she's vulnerable, like when they pull the vial of [Steve's] blood out, she's just looking at it and it breaks your heart. But then she goes right back to being a soldier. I don't know who else could pull that off."

Joining Carter in Los Angeles is familiar face Edwin Jarvis (James D'Arcy), the loyal butler of Howard Stark who gained Peggy's trust as an ally by the end of season one. This year the pair will continue to strengthen their bond.

"Obviously we wanted Jarvis to come back but the hard thing about him is that he's not SSR," Fazekas says. "[Series creators] Markus and McFeely did a really great job making the first season about Howard Stark and clearing



his name, and that's how they worked Jarvis into it. The question then was, 'How do we do it this season?' Well, we use Howard Stark, who has decided to move his base of operations to Los Angeles because there is this burgeoning scientific field out here, taking inspiration from General Atomic or Radiodyne. He's decided to move out here, do some contract work and open a movie studio," she laughs.

"When Peggy first gets here and Jarvis picks her up from the airport, you can see he has missed the adventure," Fazekas continues. "It's a big part of his arc, having a big adventure but what are the consequences to that? It's easy to come in and out [of this life] but how does that really affect him? He really gets a taste of what it means to be living this life."

Peggy will chase her assignments from the LA SSR office with Daniel Sousa (Enver Gjokaj) as her superior and Jack Thompson (Chad Michael Murray) still causing Carter grief from the New York office. "As far as Peggy is concerned, she's certainly earned the respect of her colleagues," Fazekas says of the cooling gender divide this season. "It's not like we say gender issues are great now but we are telling our story in a different way. It's not a battle she's having to fight within the SSR."

#### **MASQUED VILLAIN**

Carter's real challenge comes with the arrival of the season's villain, Whitney Frost (Wynn Everett). Known as Madame Masque in the Marvel comic universe, Frost has undergone a transformation for her *Agent Carter* appearance.

"At a certain point when we were discussing the main story and villains, we were circling female villains," Dingess tells SFX. "Her name came up pretty quickly. She's not about cosmic powers, but she's a very strong personality and a powerful and smart villain. We started talking about different characters' biographies and she is a genius, which is one of her ties to Tony Stark in Iron Man."

Asked if they had carte blanche to choose from the entire Marvel catalogue, including the '40s era of strong female creations like Sun Girl and the Blonde Phantom, Fazekas says yes – with a caveat. "Marvel is pretty generous about who we want to use. But some characters you just can't use because there are rights issues. And then there are the other shows in the Marvel Universe and you don't want to step on the stories they are telling. It's finding the thing that's not going to be telling a story that's already been told."

Dingess adds, "Oddly a lot of the characters from the '40s – when the different comic book companies were acquiring one another – are the hardest ones to get the rights to, so that played a lot into choices for both seasons."

Returning to the villainous Frost, Fazekas continues, "From there, we added the Hedy Lamarr story. She was a very glamorous actress



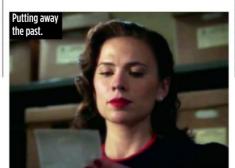
Attack Of The 50 Foot Secret Agent.

# 66 Peggy has certainly earned the respect of her colleagues 99

who was also an inventor. So we reinvented Frost from the comic books as this glamorous actress who is also a secret scientific genius."

Given the first season of Agent Carter proved a shining example of how to showcase strong female characters on television, Fazekas admits it was crucial to give Frost a story that gave her resonance. "We did not want to tell the story of someone who is evil for the sake of being evil... Anytime you are playing a villain, there's always the potential of being very arch, especially as this character is also an actress. We wanted to make sure you understand her motivations. So here are two very smart women, who took very different paths in their life, and episode four gets into that in a way where you see how it happened. So even if Whitney is the bad guy, she's not just evil for the sake of being evil up until the very end. Part of you feels bad for her."

The writers also admit that Russian agent Dottie Underwood (Bridget Regan) will be back to create more havoc for Carter. "She



got away," Dingess says of the character's disappearing act in the season one finale. "So Dottie is in play and we asked, 'What do we want to do with that?' We figured out a way to make a splash with her and then to really use her at a pivotal point in the season."

As to how, if at all, season two will tie into the big screen MCU, given season two introduces the concept of Darkforce, a dark matter of negative energy also rumoured to factor into *Doctor Strange*, Fazekas only teases, "We don't know what it is. They come upon this thing and they don't even call it Darkforce."

"Our time period allows us to come at it from a different angle," adds Dingess.

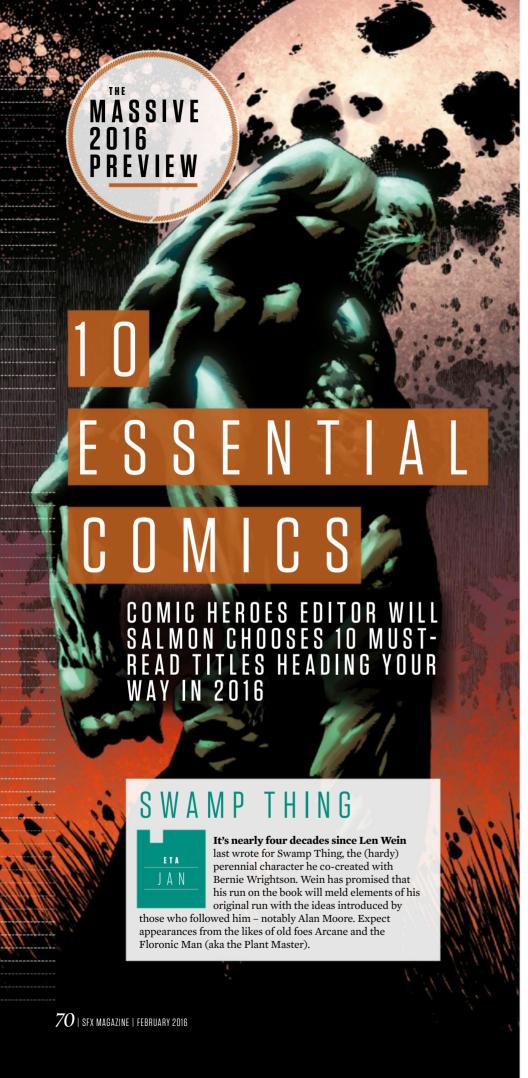
And what about rumours of a potential romance with scientist Jason Wilkes (Reggie Austin)? Fazekas grows coy again and only teases, "Peggy meets new people and it starts to open up the idea of, 'Maybe I can have that part of my life as well.' And it's been really nice to see Peggy in that light."

Los Angeles, Peggy Carter walks among you... ●

Agent Carter season two begins in the US on 5 January on ABC, and in the UK on 17 January, on Fox.

CAMINET O SO CHOCK ON STREET







## OBI-WAN AND ANAKIN



The latest in Marvel's ever-expanding *Star Wars* empire (ho ho ho) takes the brave step of focusing on the much-maligned prequel era. Charles Soule writes

and Marco Checchetto draws the five-issue miniseries which is set three years after *The Phantom Menace*. Marvel have yet to put out a bad new *Wars* title and we don't expect them to start here.



#### CRY HAVOC



**The last few years have** been good to Image Comics,

thanks to titles like Saga and Sex Criminals. Cry Havoc looks set to continue that winning streak. Si

Spurrier and Ryan Kelly's book mixes military action with mythology. None-otherthan Alan Moore has described the book as an "electrifying account of black ops, black dogs and weaponised folklore that is unlike anything you've ever seen".





#### **Probably the most** anticipated of Marvel's All-New, All-Different titles. The hiring of acclaimed

political writer and speaker Ta-Nehisi Coates is a real

statement of intent for this book. Citing Homeland, The West Wing and classic Stan Lee as his influences, this is the super-book as political thriller and marks a fresh chapter in the life of T'Challa, the King of Wakanda.



# DOCTOR WHO THE FOURTH DOCTOR



Having released acclaimed series with all of the modern Doctors, Titan is now delving into the classics. Gordon Rennie and Emma Beeby will

be writing the five-issue "Gaze

Of The Medusa", with art by Brian Williamson. It finds Tom Baker's Time Lord battling an army of cyclops-like creatures in Victorian London, with help from one Sarah Jane Smith.

#### THE WEB



One of the great pleasures of 2015 was seeing Archie Comics' Dark Circle imprint blossom. It inventively reimagined the company's

neglected characters with

style and gorgeous art. The Web, by Dave White and Szymon Kudranski, is the latest addition to the line-up. It finds 14-year-old Jane develop the same powers as her hero, the Web. A grittier take on Ms Marvel? Sold.





## MOCKINGBIRD



**Bobbi Morse gets her first** ever solo series, penned by novelist Chelsea Cain (with art by Kate Niemczyk). The character has had a boost in popularity over the last couple

of years, thanks to Agents Of SHIELD and Cain did an excellent job on a Mockingbird one-shot last year. Hopefully the regular book will retain the fun spy-fi tone.



### AMERICAN VAMPIRE



#### Batman may have made Scott Snyder a comics

superstar, but it's American Vampire (co-created with Rafael Albuquerque) that first marked him out as

something special. The Eisner awardwinning series revolves around Skinner Sweet - a vampire originally born in the Old West - and returns for its third run early next year, though details on what the storyline entails remain vague.



#### KNIG 00N



Marc Spector - aka

vigilante Moon Knight - is a sick man. For years he's had different personalities rattling about in his head, but he's more-or-less held it

together. No longer - this new series by Jeff Lemire finds Spector institutionalised. Greg Smallwood's monochrome art is suitably gritty and this looks like one of the more intriguing titles from the All-New, All-Different Marvel relaunch.

#### HEAVY METAL



How do you change the

fortunes of a title that's been coasting along for decades? Hire comics' real life sorceror supreme to work his magic, that's how.

Yes, Grant Morrison is the new editor-inchief of Heavy Metal. As well as his own work he's promising stories from the likes of Chris Burnham and Frazer Irving.







### CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

It's hero against hero in Marvel's next blockbuster



### After bonding as both

war veterans and superheroes in Captain America: The Winter Soldier, Steve Rogers and Sam Wilson (Chris Evans and Anthony Mackie) reteam in the shield-wielding sequel.

According to Evans, Wilson is the constant Cap can rely on in the battle ahead...

"Cap's a soldier," Evans tells SFX, "and I think he expects a lot of the people he trusts. And given the last Cap movie, trust has been one of the things that has been hard to find. So between him and Sam there's been a very tight bond. I don't want to give too much away, but there's a hard decision for Cap to make, and Sam and him kind of remain in unity."

Mackie tells us that Civil War's central conflict between Cap and Iron Man is one born of sibling rivalry.

"Everybody can understand confusion and bickering between family. That's all this is. I mean, Tony Stark and Captain America are brothers, and they have a misunderstanding. Like most of the time when you bicker with one of your siblings. That's kind of what Civil War has come to be. That's why people are going to relate to it so well."

Joseph McCabe

### ANT RAP

Ant-Man's Paul Rudd suits up for Civil War

#### What's it like being part of the whole Avengers ensemble?

→ That was a totally unique experience and made me feel a part of the Marvel Universe as a whole that just shooting Ant-Man did not accomplish. It was just that thing of standing around and going, "Oh my god, there they are, that's really the Iron Man suit," and "Oh my god, that metal arm, it's Winter Soldier!" I went over and I grabbed Captain America's shield. I just wanted to see it and hold it. It was like I was 10 years old again and it was a real thrill. It made it very real in a way that I hadn't really felt until that moment.

#### Will Civil War be darker than Ant-Man?

Judging by the Winter Soldier movie, it will be. It is a Captain America movie after all

#### Will Scott Lang be as funny in Civil War as he is in Ant-Man?

→ We always figured that there was going to be some levity with Ant-Man and this character, and while it is not a straight-up comedy, it still has laughs. So I think that all those things that exist in [Ant-Man] will still exist with my character in Civil War as well

#### So whose side is Ant-Man on?

→ You couldn't possibly think that I'm going to tell you that! There's no way I'm going to do that. But it was a valiant effort! Stephen Jewell





### X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

The secret history of mutantkind is about to be unearthed...



### "We got the band

back together again!" Having co-written 2003's X-Men 2, it felt like a kind of homecoming for screenwriter Michael Dougherty when Bryan Singer invited him and

fellow X-Men 2 veteran Dan Harris to contribute to X-Men: Apocalypse.

"I got to return to the X-Mansion for a bit," he laughs. "We worked with Brian and Simon Kinberg to crack the story. It really was a team effort, and it was fun to work with people that you really click with."

With sinister origins dating back to Ancient Egypt, the 5,000-year-old Apocalypse makes for a very different breed of X-villain. "With the exception of Magneto, he's one of the most fascinating characters to develop for the big screen." Dougherty tells SFX. "He really opens up and deepens the X-Men universe because for the most part we've been told that mutants are a relatively recent phenomenon, having only really surfaced in the '40s. But Apocalypse establishes that mutants are actually much older and that they've been confused with ancient deities and gods. It sort of crosses over with the ancient aliens notion, that at some point in human history, we were guided by some beings, who were wiser and stronger than us, and that they helped nurture the human race." Stephen Jewell



### SUICIDE SQUAD

### RICK FLAG

#### JOEL KINNAMAN

→ With Squad squabbles all but inevitable, Amanda Waller's top military man Rick Flag is charged with babysitting Task Force X. He's not bad with a firearm either.

### DEADSHOT

#### **WILL SMITH**

→ An assassin with a death wish and an expert marksman who never misses, Deadshot wields his trademark wrist-mounted Glocks and has a thing for Harley.

### HARLEY QUINN

### **MARGOT ROBBIE**

The Joker's psychotic squeeze has an insatiable appetite for destruction, earning her a place on the Squad. We'll also witness the fan favourite as Dr Harleen Quinzel and hanging with Mistah J in flashbacks.

### KILLER CROC

#### ADEWALE AKINNUOYE-AGBAJE

→ The Squad's most out there member isn't the comics' giant steroidal crocodile but a man with reptilian skin and a taste for human flesh.

### ENCHANTRESS

#### **CARA DELEVINGNE**

→ An ancient sorceress unleashed by tomb raider June Moone. Sporting a goth-chic style she may seem like perfect Squad material, but can anyone control her?

### DIABLO

### JAY HERNANDEZ

→ If the Human Torch joined an LA gang and got some freaky face tattoos you'd probably have Diablo. Expect those flame powers to prove very useful.





Kirk and crew warp back to cinemas for the big five-o...

ETA 2 2 J U L

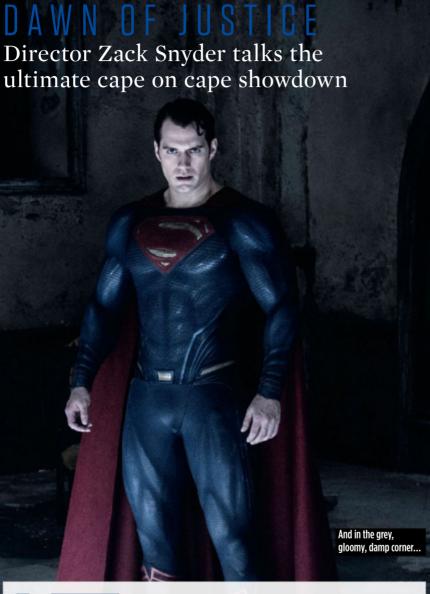
2016 marks 50 years since the USS Enterprise first fired up her mighty impulse engines. Next summer's *Star Trek Beyond* not only needs to raise a glass of Romulan Ale to that

golden anniversary – it also has to prove the final frontier remains a viable blockbuster destination on the big screen.

While JJ Abrams rebooted the 23rd century to great acclaim in 2009, the darker, Khanmangling sequel *Into Darkness* saw some of that goodwill tarnished by planet-sized plot holes and dodgy storytelling choices. JJ's since jumped ship to the Millennium Falcon, of course, and Disney's imminent, multi-movie resurrection of the Force threatens to seriously eclipse *Trek*'s pop-culture profile.

So there's a lot riding on *Beyond*. Luckily the omens are good. New helmer Justin Lim delivered the slick, machine-tooled thrills of the *Fast & Furious* franchise but also demonstrated a gift for bringing out the best in strong ensemble casts. And screenwriter Simon Pegg brings not just a bona fide geek sensibility but the kind of comedy chops that made for some of the most memorable *Trek* capers from "A Piece Of The Action" to *The Voyage Home*.

Add the charismatic Idris Elba – potentially on bad guy duty – and a stated intent to return to *Trek*'s essential mission of deep space exploration and there's every hope the long-lived franchise will, indeed, seek out new life next summer... Nick Setchfield



BATMAN V SUPERMAN:

2 5 M A R

**ESSENTIAL FILMS** 

### How did this film come about?

→ The movie was born from the conversation we had about how to get to *Justice League*. And then just talking about how to move forward: who would take on Superman? Next thing we knew, we're talking about how they would fight each other.

### How did you find the balance of screen time with Batman and Superman?

→ We never really looked at it like, "Oh, we should have 30 per cent more Superman here, and more Batman." It was much more organic to the story that we're telling. It's not a Batman movie any more than it's a Superman movie.

#### How does Lex Luthor fit into the mix?

→ I feel like Lex is one of the great villains in the DC universe. We had to be very careful with it because he's such a particular villain. That's amazing fun, and incredibly satisfying and interesting, to take a character like Lex and really try to understand him. Matt Maytum

### GHOSTBUSTERS

Who you gonna call? A case for the rebooted spook-chasers...



### The world's been

crying out for another Ghostbusters movie for over a quarter of a century. There's been no shortage of rumours - everything from a standard threequel with the original team,

to Bill Murray as a Venkghost, and Seth Rogen leading a new generation of spook hunters..

But now a film's actually happening, much of the internet has decided they don't like it despite the fact no one's seen much beyond a few photos from production. Mad. right?

Because the route this Ghostbusters reboot is taking is genius. Bringing the original cast back is no longer an option - the sad death of Harold Ramis in 2014 made sure of that, and Murray never seemed keen anyway - so doing something new with the concept is the only way to go. A like-for-like retread of arguably the greatest sci-fi comedy of all time (sorry, Spaceballs) is doomed to failure, so it's time to shake-up the formula - and bringing in all-female 'Busters is a brilliant way to do that.

As with the original, the cast is packed with proven comedians lifted from the ranks of Saturday Night Live, while Bridesmaids director Paul Feig has some serious laugh credentials. Many of the original cast are back for cameos, the updated suits and Ecto-1 look the part, and Thor is playing the receptionist. It won't be the original - and nor should it try to be - but the world is more than big enough for two Ghostbusting teams. Richard Edwards





### WARCRAFT: BEGINNING

For the Horde! **Duncan Jones brings** the world of orcs and men to the big screen



### It may have been

trapped in development hell for the best part of a decade, but longgestating fantasy adaptation Warcraft: The Beginning looks to be worth the wait.

Not just because it boasts scale to rival The Lord Of The Rings, but because it's threatening to be the first honest-to-goodness-great videogame movie.

"Everybody wanted to make sure that if we took on this huge undertaking that it was the right version," executive producer Jillian Share tells SFX. "We certainly explored a lot of different paths along the way but when [Duncan Jones] came in it was like the script, the filmmaker, the whole thing fitted together."

As the name implies, Warcraft: The Beginning goes back to the very start of the conflict - the first encounter between orcs and humans as the hulking inhabitants of Draenor are forced to evacuate their dying homeworld and seek refuge on Azeroth. But this isn't a traditional Tolkien fantasy yarn. In the world of Warcraft conflict is complicated.

"It was important for Duncan and all of us that it wasn't a fantasy movie about good and evil, because that just doesn't ring true with the Warcraft franchise," says producer Stuart Fenegan. "There's good and evil on both sides and I think that's much more true of the real world as well." Jordan Farley



### ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

The first Star Wars spinoff movie is combat ready



All eyes are fixed on The Force

Awakens but the most crucial Star Wars movie of them all arrives a year from now. For the first time we'll be taken beyond the Skywalker clan, beyond the generational saga that's come to define the franchise since 1977. As Ben Kenobi would put it, we're

about to take our first step into a larger world...

Not that Rogue One: A Star Wars Story cuts too many ties to the galaxy George Lucas created. It goes right back to the origin myth, in fact, taking its premise from those deathless words in the opening crawl of A New Hope: "During the battle, rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon, the DEATH STAR."

We're promised "a daring mission" and a gritty, "groundwar perspective", more Guns Of Navarone than Lord Of The Rings, exploring the fight against galactic tyranny from the Rebel military viewpoint. Pitched as "a period piece" that slots into the timeframe that led to Episode IV, it's a strictly mysticism-free zone, downplaying lightsabers in favour of lock and load.

Directed by Godzilla's Gareth Edwards and wielding a strong, diverse ensemble cast led by Oscar-nominated Felicity Jones, Rogue One looks to put the war into Star Wars... Nick Setchfield



### INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

Twenty years on, get ready for the rematch...



Two decades after aliens nuked the White House in

Roland Emmerich's blockbusting Independence Day, they're preparing a second assault on planet Earth in Independence Day: Resurgence. Originally developed by Emmerich and co-writer Dean Devlin back in 2004, it's taken the duo over a decade to kick the script into shape - but what they've come up with sounds huge.

"We're ready with a bigger punch and bigger shields," says Jeff Goldblum, returning as uber-boffin David

Levinson, who's now head of planet-protecting programme Earth Space Defense. "The technology we found from the downed alien ships has been married with ours," he adds, so ESD has, possibly, even colonised the Moon.

Also different: Will Smith opted out of more ET-bashing, but his character's son, Dylan, is back, played by newcomer Jessie Usher. "Dylan grew up in the world his dad saved," says Usher, "so you can imagine what being the son of the world saviour is like." With returnees Vivica A Fox, Bill Pullman and Brent Spiner joined by newbies Liam Hemsworth and Maika Monroe, bigger really is better where the cast's concerned. "The scope of this film is much bigger than the last one," confirms Hemsworth. Get ready to rumble... Josh Winning

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### ESSENTI

JONATHAN WRIGHT PICKS THE NOVELS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR BOOKSHELVES TREMBLE IN ANTICIPATION

### OCCUPY ME Tricia Sullivan



After winning the Clarke Award in 1999 for Dreaming In Smoke, Tricia Sullivan's career didn't quite take off as many of us expected. But she's remained a brave and brilliant writer.

Dazzling thriller Occupy Me, centred on the hunt for a killer wearing another man's body, should be the book to put her back in the spotlight.





### MINUTES Sarah Pinborough



While she's certainly not a retiring soul, it sometimes seems

as if Sarah Pinborough is hiding in plain sight. Which is another way of saying that she's becoming a major writer: inventive and adept at crafting fine psychological thrillers. 13 Minutes, which revolves around how dying can change your life, is a case in point.

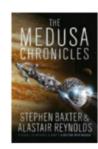
### THE MEDUSA CHRONICLES

Stephen Baxter & Alastair Reynolds



### In a sequel to Arthur C Clarke's A

Meeting With Medusa (1971), two of space opera's biggest stars team up to continue the adventures of Howard Falcon, a cyborg explorer who encountered a vast, blimp-like creature amidst the clouds of Jupiter. A project, Baxter told SFX recently, that "just took off in a conversation" about Clarke's classic novella.





### CENSUS-TAKER China Miéville

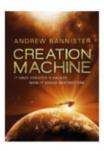


#### In a remote house, a

lonely boy who's witnessed a traumatic event dreams of safety. A knock on his door by a punctilious stranger initially seems to offer salvation, but does it? Miéville's new novella, which explores themes of identity and memory, confirms the new seriousness in his work evident in recent short stories. In a Kafkaesque fashion, be afraid.

### CREATION MACHINE

### Andrew Bannister





Andrew Bannister's agent, John Jarrold, likens his client's debut to the work of Iain M Banks - not a claim Jarrold makes lightly as someone who was both friend and publisher to the much-missed Big Beard. A space opera sequence set within The Spin, an artificially created planet cluster which is in itself such a brilliant idea we can't wait to see the book.

### DISSIDENCE Ken MacLeod



What would a robot rebellion look like from the robots' point of view? The first volume in Ken MacLeod's Corporation Wars trilogy imagines a future where sentient 'bots work for mining corporations and go maverick on their masters. Expect a novel that's part adventure tale and part thought-provoking exploration of cutting-edge ideas around artificial intelligence.

### FALSE HEARTS Laura Lam





When one twin is accused of murder, her sister will do anything to secure her sibling's release - including, it turns out, assuming her sister's identity, and plunging into a gangland world of mind-altering drugs. California-raised Lam, who now lives in chilly Scotland, conjures up a near-future San Francisco for her first novel with a major publisher, and a pre-publication buzz builds.

### NINEFOX GAMBIT

### Yoon Halee



Korean-American Yoon Ha Lee is one of SF's rising stars. Her Machineries Of Empire trilogy features a spaceship captain, Kel Cheris, whose "400-year-old undead advisor" is "her best ally and her most dangerous enemy". To judge by the best of the author's short stories, this might be

something special.





### THE FIREMAN Joe Hill



Continuing to prove he's one of horror fiction's brightest sparks, Hill offers his take on the-end-of-the-world-aswe-know-it novel in a tale of humanity being afflicted with "dragonscale", a disease that causes its sufferers to burst into flames. It's looking like a book that finds considerable solace in humanity's capacity (sometimes) to do the right thing.

### FELLSIDE MR Carey



Carey's follow-up to The Girl With All The Gifts is a typically high-concept story centred on a woman, Jess Moulson, who finds herself in jail for a murder she can't remember committing. Her cell in Fellside, on the bleak Yorkshire moors, is haunted by the ghost of the 10-year-old boy she's said to have killed - and he says he needs her help.





mankind has colonised the solar system. *The Expanse* finds cynical detective Josephus "Joe" Miller (Thomas Jane) and rogue ship captain Jim Holden (Steven Strait) joining forces to find Julie Mao (Florence Faivre), a missing young woman who may hold the key to a growing conspiracy involving Earth, Mars and the Belt

"It's a cop case like a lot of great noir shows where there's a tiny, little meaningless incident – a case nobody wants, thrown on a deadbeat cop's desk – and Miller starts pulling on this little thread of this missing rich girl," says Shankar. "Over the course of the show, this case ends up being the thread that leads to this massive, epic conspiracy. It starts as a tiny little incident that really is connected to everything this is about: all our characters and all the conspiracies. That case envelops the show."

"Miller is the crusader who has lost his idealism and has to find his way back to it through this case that he's following," adds Fergus. "Holden has these ideas about justice and what the real world is like. One has lived and one has not lived, yet. They are going to teach each other their viewpoint of how they see the world."

Miller and Holden may be the primary characters, but other key players round out the cast. That group includes Naomi Nagata (Dominique Tipper), the spaceship Canterbury's head engineer; the vessel's pilot Alex Kamal (Cas Anvar); as well as its

mechanic Amos Burton (Wes Chatham).
There's also Chrisjen Avasarala (Shohreh Aghdashloo), the Deputy Undersecretary for the United Nations. Details about their backstories, histories and moral compasses will emerge as the season progresses.
"Ty and Daniel are incredibly prolific authors," notes Shankar. "In addition to all the

books of the series, they've written a whole bunch of supporting novellas. Part of the fun about doing the show is that we get this great, intense, adventure-driven plot in the main book. Then, we've been bringing in the individual, real-life character, study stories from







### 66 It shows life as it is probably going to be, should we make it that far 99

the novellas and using them to inform the people in the show. This is where the comparisons to *Game Of Thrones* and *Battlestar* are apt. Without making ourselves sound too grand, it is that slow unfolding as you learn about the people and you get to explore dimensions with them, episode after episode, and season after season."

#### **GOING LARGE**

It's a crisp November afternoon when *SFX* visits *The Expanse* set. Inside Toronto's Pinewood Studios, three huge soundstages have been transformed. In one corner stand living quarters that are constantly redressed for various characters. A recently erected police station takes over a substantial chunk of space. A menacing, multi-story metal airlock with a warning sign, "Caution: Hydraulic Door", looms over the area. Another soundstage serves as the dwarf planet Ceres' underground colony. Even more striking is the nearby docked, 430-metre spaceship, the Donnager.

"What we loved about the vision of this story was it was a very functional, real, gritty, what we call a 'Ridley Scott version of the future," says Fergus. "This is how they live in the future. Sociology can be matched back to today with the railroads, racism, the working class and empires rising and falling. Our world projects a little bit out with a technological advance that changes the game, and, yet, humanity doesn't change. We're still the same, for good or ill. Technology has changed and our possibilities

have expanded. It shows real life as it probably is going to be, should we make it that far. It's completely relatable to now, yet it's something you've never seen before."

On hand to offer input and watch their baby being brought to life are Abraham and Franck. It's becoming more and more common for authors to be on set, and the duo is taking full advantage of that.

"When I was brought onto the show, I was told the writers of the books are going to be in the room," recalls Shankar. "I was like, 'Shit.' I was kind of shocked. That's not always done in television. As it turns out, it's Ty Franck and Daniel Abrahams. It's so fantastic having them in the room. At every single stage of the process, we were like, 'If only there was some element that could show off Belter culture.' Ty and Daniel would go, 'Hey, what about this thing that is in book nine?' They've been involved since the very beginning in every single bit of development."

"They defend their material, but at the same time, they are really open," chimes in Fergus. "They are always looking for a better choice, a stronger choice. They are like the masters of the story, yet, they will break anything that needs to be broken or made better. We moved characters from book two into season one. We restructured some things. We have expanded on characters, who are very minor in the books, and have awesome possibilities.

"We've shrunk back people who are more prominent in the books," adds Fergus. "The

great thing is we don't have to tiptoe around the authors and feel like we're messing with their material. They know the soul of the show is exactly what they intended, so they don't mind us playing with the building blocks."

On a weekly basis, Miller and Holden's investigation will bring them closer to the conspirators and their hidden agenda. Motives and secrets will come to light. Those elements could keep fans guessing for a season or four, but Fergus and Shankar have no intention of stringing people along.

"What we wanted to do is we're telling one complete story," says Fergus. "As much as we change and expand on things, the idea that it's a fully formed story means we're not making it up as we go along. Everything fits into a piece of this mosaic and that allows us to have tons of freedom within the boundaries. We know what the story is. It's not just, 'Let's keep it going. We'll do this. We'll go there.' There is one theme and one story being told.

"I think great TV now doesn't have consistency in the way of you know what to expect," he continues. "You shift focus. You change point of view. You split to the enemy side. You spend a whole episode in one room. Then the next episode is all action. You keep shifting the rhythm of the show, which is awesome about modern television."

Fergus and Shankar may emphasise strong characters and plot, but they aren't skimping on the action. Viewers can expect plenty of gun-slinging, scuffles and explosions. In fact, one stand-out moment is in the pilot.

"One of the most thrilling scenes involves the Canterbury changing course," concludes Shankar. "The ship is answering this distress call and this massive lumbering – think of it as a super-tanker in space – has to change direction. It's an old ship that might break apart. It has to turn its engines and point in the opposite way and fire up just to change course. That could possibly rip the ship apart. People love that visceral kind of material."

The Expanse begins on Syfy in the US on 14 December.





### ADAM ROBERTS

### Taking life at a Kanter... Meet one of Brit SF's busiest and best novelists

Words by Jonathan Wright /// Photography by Will Ireland

he writings of 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant may not seem the most obvious starting point for a science fiction novel, but that doesn't bother Adam Roberts too much. "SF writers so often extrapolate from scientists – Einstein, Schrödinger, Alcubierre," he says, "Why not from the great philosophers?"

Why not indeed? Accordingly, Roberts' new novel, *The Thing Itself*, is steeped in Kant's work, and in particular the notion that "certain things, like time, space, causality and so on, are facets of our consciousness, not features of the real world out there (what Kant calls the *Ding an sich*)".

But there's a problem with this idea. "It is simply unfalsifiable," says Roberts. "It's a claim about the nature of our consciousnesses, and we only *have* our consciousnesses, we can't 'step outside' our own thought processes and perceptions in order to perceive them and analyse them 'from the outside'.

"Ah: but *then* I thought – if we developed a proper AI or computer consciousness, then we might be able to triangulate our own perceptions with a radically other kind of consciousness, and determine once and for all if Kant was 'right' or not. That was the starting point: let's say he is."

If by now your brain is hurting, it's worth adding the book begins with a chapter that, with its Antarctic setting, riffs off John Carpenter's *The Thing*. Roberts may explore big ideas but, in his own words, "I'm trying to blend quite a highfalutin 'novel of ideas' with healthily disreputable pulp SF and a ghost story – which is quite tricky."

### **EXPANDING UNIVERSES**

Nevertheless, Roberts is not alone in this endeavour, although whether it's SF novelists who are most often attempting these kinds of mash-ups is an intriguing question. When SFX suggests "literary" novelist David Mitchell (Cloud Atlas, The Bone Clocks) is writing the most compelling speculative fiction of the moment, and that by contrast genre conventions are becoming a bit of a straitjacket for many SFF writers, Roberts doesn't disagree – although he does point out that interviews suggest "Mitchell has always been a big fan of SF and fantasy, and that he's unembarrassed about it".

He adds: "A lot of literary writers are writing SF now, or bringing aspects of SF to their work. I'm thinking of Karen Kay Fowler's *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, or *The People In The Trees*, by Hanya Yanagihara: great books, and books in which genre features and a broader 'fantastika' sensibility inter-penetrates the literary sensibility." Roberts has an intriguing take on another reason genre writers should take more risks. The new *Avengers* two-parter is rumoured to cost \$1 billion. "But with the novel the financial stakes are very small. That ought to mean that writers are much happier taking risks, being experimental and so on. But, with a few exceptions, they're not. That's a shame. Lots of especially younger writers are very cautious and same-y about the sorts of books they write. But why *not* write a pulp SF novelisation of Kant's *Critique Of Pure Reason*? What have you got to lose? Since it won't cost a billion dollars, it can't lose a billion dollars."

To be fair, one riposte here is that Roberts has a relatively well-paid day job, as a Professor of Literature at Royal Holloway, University of London. Indeed, considering he's got two children, and also teaches, writes academic books (he's currently updating his 2007 *History Of Science Fiction*), blogs, writes comic parodies and reviews for newspapers, it seems something of a miracle he's managed to turn out a novel a year since his debut, *Salt* (2000).

#### SO LITTLE TIME

Then again, as your granny might have told you, if you want something done, ask a busy person. "Looking back, I genuinely have no idea what I did with all my spare time back before we had kids," he says. "There must have been great deserts of open-ended free time back then, and yet I achieved very little with that time. I'm much more productive now, largely because I know that if I get an hour free I dare not waste it. One advantage I have is that I genuinely enjoy the writing process, sitting at my laptop, moving my fingers over the keys. It's when I'm happiest."

Especially since he learnt to finish books. A turning point, he says, was when he told himself "no more getting discouraged and giving up at page 55 and starting some other new novel". Instead he had to keep going. "It was painful, but I did it," he remembers. "Then I looked at what I had written and lo! it was shit. But it was at least a complete draft of shit. So I wrote another, and it was less shit. And then I wrote a third, and it sold."

As for Roberts' next novel, he says Alfred Hitchcock once had an idea for a movie that would begin with robots building cars. Then an inspector would come along, open the boot of one of the automobiles and discover a body. But Hitchcock could never work out how the corpse came to be in the boot. "So far," says Roberts, "I can think of three ways the body might have ended up there..."

The Thing Itself is published on 17 December.

### Biodata 🛡

#### Occupation

→ Novelist

**Born**→ 30 June 1965

#### From

→ Croydon

### Greatest Hits → Jack Glass: A Golden Age Story (2012) won both

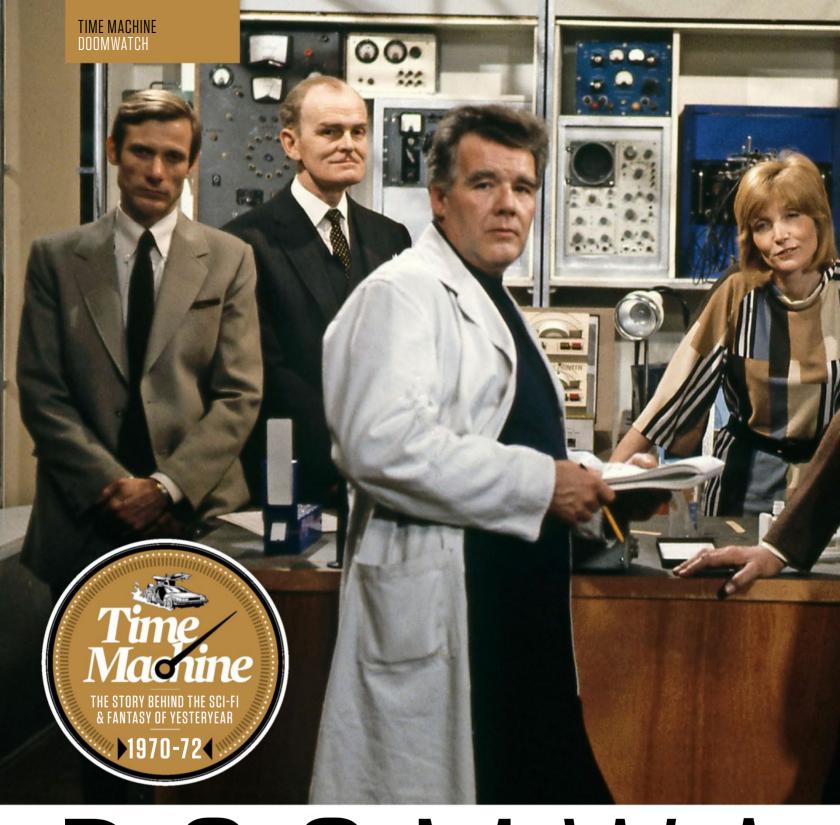
the BSFA Award and the John W Campbell Memorial Award.

#### Random Fact

→ "I have a portion of an Elvis Costello lyric tattooed on my shoulder: 'The Poet's Rest' from 'Sleep Of The Just'"









### The curious story of the BBC's "post-sci-fi" series, as recalled by Alan Barnes

t remains one of the most arresting openings to a television series it's possible to imagine, the idea alone enough to stir the bowels of the most frequent flyer. In the cockpit of a passenger liner, cruising at high altitude, pilot and co-pilot watch in helpless horror as the controls all around them begin to bleed molten black. Crash.

First broadcast on 9 February 1970, "The Plastic Eaters" caused the BBC's *Doomwatch* to impact upon the public consciousness with all the force of that dissolving jet on the ground below. The reason for that unscheduled descent, as the episode's title suggested, was accidental contamination by a plastic-eating bacteriological agent, "Variant 14" – making a meal of wire insulation, not domestic waste, as intended. "The days when you and I marvelled at the 'miracles' of science... are over," co-creator Gerry Davis told *Radio Times*. "We've grown up now – and we're frightened. The findings of science are still marvellous, but now is the time to stop dreaming up science fiction about them and write what we call 'sci-fact'. The honeymoon of science is over. That's what *Doomwatch* is all about!"

That "we're frightened" was highly telling. *Doomwatch*, in part, was designed to shock and awe with tales of techno-horror from the fringes of current scientific possibility: in "Friday's Child", monkey hearts transplanted into ailing tinies, and a brainless foetus bred for spare parts; in "Re-Entry Forbidden", a paranoid schizophrenic aboard a nuclear-powered space shot; in "Spectre At The Feast", an LSD-like chemical polluting the food chain. "The Red Sky", meanwhile, concerned brain-busting noise produced by a "hypersonic" aircraft, causing those afflicted to suffer infernal visions – an entirely literal translation of the existential threat underlying all of *Doomwatch*; science without conscience, the show suggested, opened the gateway to hell.

Its creators, of course, had form in this field. High-flying opthalmologist Dr Christopher "Kit" Pedler had first met former Doctor Who script editor Davis in 1966, when the latter was seeking to recruit a scientific adviser to the series - which by that time had long-since ceased to insert even the occasional O-Level physics poser as part of its remit to "inform, educate, entertain". Having (basically) invented the internet as a means for a super-computer to take over the world in "The War Machines" (1966), Pedler pondered where elective spare part surgery might lead mankind, and came up with the (literally) heartless Cybermen. Back in the Earthly realm, however, the power of what would become

### 66 Science without conscience, the show suggested, opened the gateway to hell 99

known decades later as the "military-industrial complex" vexed Pedler even more - government and business using funding to set the research and development agenda. "Put a scientist under political pressure, and he'll do anything you like... I know," Nobel Prize-winning Dr Spencer Quist declares in "The Plastic Eaters" - guilt over his part in the development of the H-bomb having led him to become the director of "Doomwatch", a government department "set up to investigate any scientific research, public or private, which would possibly be harmful to man".



ith their jointly-authored pilot script "The Plastic Eaters" accepted by the BBC, Pedler and Davis went to work devising episode ideas sufficient to complete a 13-week run, most of which would then be delegated to outside writers. Staff producer Terence Dudley, appointed to the project, bagsied a couple to script himself including an idea about a species of cannibal rat genetically engineered to circumvent the

forbidding strictures of the Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962, by eating its own kind. Transmitted fourth, Dudley's "Tomorrow, The Rat" exploited a particularly 1970s neurosis - the humble rat as a metaphor for modern decay. seen in the pages of James Herbert's schlock bestseller The

Rats (1974), heard in the lyrics of David Bowie's Diamond Dogs LP ("Fleas the size of rats sucked on rats the size of cats..."), and reaching its ultimate manifestation in epoch-defining reports of Leicester Square turned into a rodent-infested rubbish dump during the so-called Winter of Discontent. But it wasn't Dudley's gleeful choreography of rattus sapiens attacking motorists, leaping on housewives, crawling out of toilets and stampeding schoolchildren that caused (as the front page of the next day's Daily Express reported) that archetypally '70s event, the jamming of the BBC switchboard. It was the episode's last-but-one shot, a meat-bedecked dummy representing the gnawed corpse of the rat-breeding lady geneticist responsible.

The first series concluded with the convention-defying dispatch of Quist's junior associate Tobias Wren, blown up by a bomb whose timer actually ticked past "001". But Toby actor Robert Powell, all-but unknown 13 weeks before, wasn't the only individual whom Doomwatch had turned into a star; unlikely as

Creators Kit Pedler, Terence Dudley and **Gerry Davis** 

something else

that is brown!

it might have seemed, the balding, polo-necked Pedler had become the tabloids' boffin of boffins. He was signed up to head the Daily Mirror's very own 'Doomwatch' panel, "waiting to hear from YOU about the things that worry you - from aircraft noise to insecticides, from the state of your breakfast kipper to the state of your local river. In fact anything, however trivial or baffling, that disturbs you about the conditions of your daily life. CALL IN DOOMWATCH! THEY ARE

READY FOR ACTION!" MPs sought to co-opt Pedler onto Doomwatches of their own devising; sensing the opportunity to effect real-world change, Pedler appears to have lapped it all up - and who can blame him?

The second series commenced that December, with Dudley's "You Killed Toby Wren" - in which John Barron's

slippery Minister, exploiting Wren's demise in a bid to rid himself of the turbulent Quist, advised his Permanent Secretary: "You're very much mistaken in assuming that Quist is Doomwatch... Doomwatch remains a good idea, an excellent watchdog, but it must learn to come to heel - and it will do it a lot better without Quist snarling around our ankles." Substitute "Pedler" for "Quist", and one gets a sense of what had been occurring behind the scenes. As documented in Michael Seely's authoritative guide to the series. Prophets Of Doom (Miwk Publishing, 2012), Dudley had rejected many of Pedler and Davis's story concepts as more Doctor Who than Doomwatch; in this, he was supported by BBC Head of Series Andrew Osborn, who appears to have imagined Doomwatch as simply a 1970s updating of his ponderous 1960s "Ministry of Research" series, R3. And so Doomwatch's second season contained fewer sci-fi shockers than the first - among them, though: "The Iron Doctor", in which an experimental computer installed in a geriatric ward gravitated from

### DOOM UNWATCHED

The BBC has lost 14 of Doomwatch's 38 episodes - but which would we most like to see?

#### 1.02 "FRIDAY'S CHILD"

→ A latterday Frankenstein grows new life in a lab. "The agony was piled on without restraint," said the *Daily Mirror*.

#### 1.13 "SURVIVAL CODE"

A nuclear warhead is washed up at the end of a pier. Toby Wren thinks he's defused it - but then he finds another wire..

#### 3.01 "FIRE AND BRIMSTONE"

John Ridge turns terrorist in an episode that enraged loyal viewers - but rightly or wrongly? We'd love to find out for ourselves.

#### 3.03 "SAY KNIFE, FAT MAN"

A pre-Doctor Who Elisabeth Sladen plays "Sarah" (!), one of a gang of radical students stealing plutonium to build their own Bomb



SEX AND VIOLENCE

The Doomwatch nobody saw...

Notoriously, third series episode "Sex And Violence" was pulled a week or two ahead of transmission, and remains unbroadcast to this day. Here, Doomwatch's assignment was to investigate "moral pollution", in an episode clearly designed to satirise Lord Longford's much-ridiculed 197 commission on pornography. It's been said that the episode went unshown either because it incorporated actual documentary footage of a mass public execution by firing squad in Nigeria. or because its fictional subcommittee incorporated obvious caricatures of Longford himself, clean-up-TV campaigner Mary Whitehouse and wholesome singer Cliff Richard.



euthanasia to outright murder; Davis's own "The Web Of Fear", which gave arachnids something like the "Tomorrow, The Rat" treatment; and "In The Dark", which gueststarred Patrick Troughton as a terminally-ill industrialist determined to live forever as a disembodied brain.



ith Davis leaving to plod out his script editor's contract on police show Softly, Softly, and Pedler refusing to furnish Dudley with further story ideas, Dudley was free to rework the third year according to his own design. Both Wren's replacement Geoff Hardcastle (John Nolan) and Doomwatch's sole non-secretarial female, biologist Dr Fay Chantry (Jean Trend), were summarily dropped. The series opened with Dudley's "Fire And Brimstone", in which Quist's second-in-command, bum-pinching office Lothario Dr John Ridge (Simon Oates) - equal parts Jason King and the Milk Tray Man - went suddenly barmy, stealing six phials of anthrax from Porton Down and posting them far and wide, so forcing the world's newspapers to print his personal eco-manifesto. "Outlaw the poisoners! Outlaw the filth makers," he raved. "Publicity! It's our only chance! Publicity, publicity and still more publicity..." (This startling development was noisily disowned by Pedler and Davis, commandeering the press for their purposes.)

On screen, Ridge's meltdown enabled the Minister to place an Intelligence man inside Doomwatch - Commander Neil Stafford (John Bown), the Department's first nonsecretarial non-scientist. Quist, hitherto a grumpy loner with no sex life to speak of, suddenly acquired a wife psychiatrist Dr Anne Tarrant (Elizabeth Weaver), with whom he could discuss Great Moral Issues over the

breakfast table of their charming cottage - as in "Waiting For A Knighthood", 50 minutes' worth of brow-furrowing over the issue of lead in petrol (revealed to be the cause of Ridge's mania). New Scientist had earlier reported that Dudley intended to eliminate "cardboard characterisation" from the series - but here that amounted to affording an oil baron character the opportunity to put forward his point of view, unchallenged: "Everybody seems to be jumping onto the anti-pollution bandwagon... the common good is not served by panic legislation." No wonder that a week or two after the episode went out, a disgruntled schoolboy viewer wrote to New Scientist to complain that the series had "sold out to its ultimate controllers: industry and... the CIA"!

Doomwatch was soon cancelled, of course. For want of a proper ending, we might, perhaps, have imagined Quist and his team going out with a bang, racing to track down a chemist in the Far East who's developed a very scary virus... but arriving too late to prevent the catastrophic spillage that heralded the beginning of the end in Dudley's next-but-one assignment: producing Terry Nation's post-apocalypse saga Survivors (1975-7). But no.

Quist's questing, in fact, concluded 27 long years later in "Winter Angel" (1999), a one-off TV movie produced by Working Title for the fledgling Channel 5. Quist, we learn,

"was retired as a pain in the arse, but he never gave it up"; now, he was seeking to recruit astrophysicist Dr Neil Tannahill (Trevor Eve) into the young band of eco-warriors he's gathered to investigate sinister goings-on at a decommissioned nuclear power station. Inside: a manmade black hole, created to generate unlimited energy - but its instability meant it now requires vast quantities of imported nuclear waste to feed its insatiable appetite. Philip Stone replaced the late John Paul as Quist, who met a fiery end at the hands of hired assassins - but he'd bequeath to Tannahill CD-ROMs holding the complete Doomwatch files: "Every scientific nightmare known to man..." Dull economics precluded the production of further TV movies, as had been intended - but "Winter Angel" proved a pretty decent postscript, nonetheless.

Doomwatch is being released on DVD in April 2016.



# SCENE SCENE

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# edited by Ian Berriman

CINEMA 94

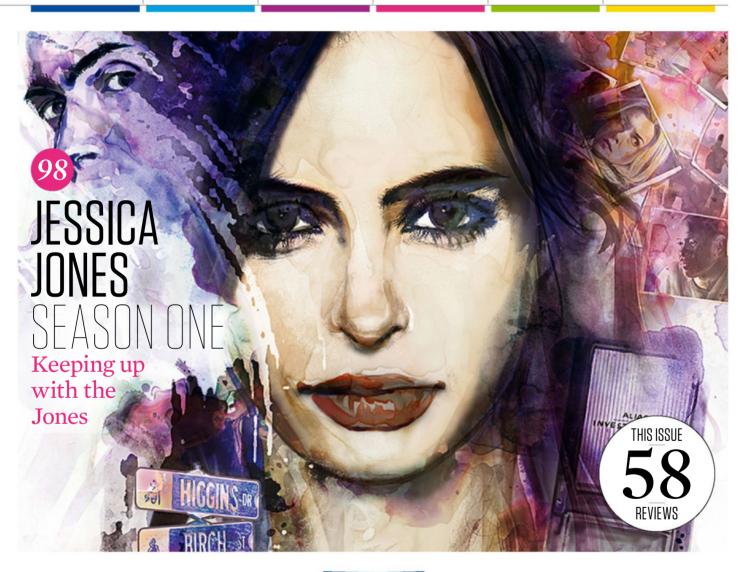
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### Highlights &



94 THE HUNGER **GAMES: MOCKINGJAY** PART 2

> The lass with the bow bows out.



THE MAN IN THE HIGH **CASTLE** 

> Time to find out if Amazon Prime know Dick.



THE THING **ITSELF** 

→ Adam Roberts's new novel has an explanation for the

→ RATINGS EXPLAINED

\*\*\* SUPERB

★★★ GOOD ★★★ AVERAGE

\*\* POOR

Fermi Paradox.

\* TERRIBLE



### THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY PART 2

Games over



RELEASED OUT NOW!

12A | 137 minutes

Director Francis Lawrence Cast Jennifer Lawrence, Josh

Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Donald Sutherland, Julianne Moore

### Harry Potter has a lot to

answer for. The infuriatingly unnecessary trend of splitting final books into two films may be a major money-spinner, but it rarely reaps creative dividends. Take last year's Mockingjay Part 1, a plodding and largely meritless chapter in the Hunger Games saga which sullied the sterling standard set by the first two films. Fortunately, Mockingjay Part 2 finds the series back on target.

Though the rebels are engaged in a propaganda war for hearts and minds, this time it really is war as,

led by Julianne Moore's President Coin, they march on the Capitol and Donald Sutherland's Machiavellian President Snow. Katniss, Gale and a still-not-quiteright-in-the-head Peeta are sent in well behind the front lines with an elite group of soldiers dubbed Star Squad, to capture moraleboosting footage for broadcast during the assault. Katniss has every intention to go off mission and assassinate Snow, but with sadistic booby traps on every block things are more dangerous than ever for The Girl On Fire.

The Hunger Games has never shied away from treacle-dark drama, but Mockingjay Part 2 is easily the series' bleakest instalment. There's a bodycount and bloodlust that would be shocking in a first-person shooter, pushing the limits of the 12A





certificate. But it's as much about the effect of violence on young minds as it is about the physical aftermath. You get the sense that, even if they make it out alive, a happy ending is all but impossible for these characters - daring stuff for a mainstream franchise.

The film also injects a flavour of the actual games back into proceedings after murderous theatrics sat out Part 1, with the deadly "pods" that line the streets turning the Capitol itself into an arena of death, with events beamed to screens and declared "mandatory viewing". It's a

### **66** Part 2 finds the series back on target 왯

welcome addition. An extended sequence set in a subterranean sewer is claustrophobic and impressively intense, as Katniss and co are hounded by a new breed of zombie-like mutts. They're the series' most unsettling creation, director Francis

### Reviews



Lawrence finally making amends for messing up the zombiewannabes of I Am Legend.

As you might expect at this stage. Jennifer Lawrence carries the series' substantial weight on her shoulders with ease. Katniss is battle-scarred and psychologically wrecked before the action even kicks off, and Lawrence perfectly conveys the character's steelyeyed determination and everpresent vulnerability. Sutherland is also superb; his hiss-worthy Snow could turn pantomime at a moment's notice, but remains believably evil. Anyone outside the central love triangle doesn't get much of a look in though, even major players such as Finnick and Primrose, while the new additions to the cast barely register.

Other niggles: that love triangle feels more irrelevant to the real meat of the story than ever, and the brutally swift violence means that some major deaths whizz by with barely a moment of acknowledgment. The ugly split that left Mockingjay Part 1 all set-up with no payoff has repercussions here as well, with a few too many scenes featuring people nattering away in

abandoned buildings causing the film to occasionally sag when it should soar.

Despite these problems, this is about as good a sendoff for Katniss and Panem as you could hope for. Given Hollywood's continuing reluctance to cast female action leads and the uncompromising subject matter, the odds couldn't have been in its favour, but this final chapter, and the series as a whole, has achieved a decisive victory. Jordan Farley

Danny Strong, who co-wrote both Part 1 and Part 2, also played "Geek trio" nerd Jonathan in Buffy The Vampire Slayer.

### IT'S A TRAP!

Four more deadly devices

### RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

The classic sequence where Indy's theft of an idol triggers poison darts and sends a giant boulder rolling after him was inspired by 1954 Uncle Scrooge strip "The Seven Cities Of Cibola"



### "THE FIVE DOCTORS"

The tiled floor in the Tomb of Rassilon looks harmless, but reaching the fifth row activates deadly green BBC Micro graphics! Unless you can calculate the safe path using the mathematical constant pi, that is...

#### CUBE

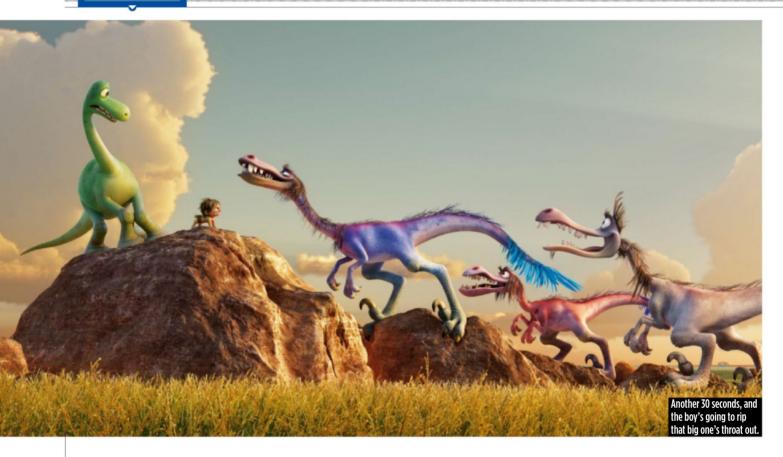
Vincenzo Natali's cult 1997 film sees a bunch of strangers trapped in a maze of identical rooms, cut down by booby traps. Activated by motion, heat or sound, they slice you apart with razorwire or spray acid in your face.



#### RESIDENT EVIL

In the 2002 videogame adap, opening a door trips a defence system that sends a laser along a corridor at ankle, chest and head height. Just when it looks like Colin Salmon's athletic commando will survive, it switches to a grid formation and dices the poor bugger. Ouch.





### THE GOOD DINOSAUR

### The Really Wild Bunch



RELEASED OUT NOW!

PG | 101 minutes

Director Peter Sohn

Cast Raymond Ochoa, Jack Bright, Jeffrey Wright, Frances McDormand, Sam Elliott, Steve Zahn, Anna Paquin

### "Simplicity is the ultimate

sophistication," was a phrase Pixar co-founder Steve Jobs was fond of, and it could almost be a maxim for The Good Dinosaur. 2015 marks the first time two Pixar films have been released in one year, and in a lot of respects, this second effort couldn't be more different from summer's Inside Out. While that gloried in its complexity, The Good Dinosaur feels at heart like a child's picture book, from the bright, colourful characters to the simple

linear plot. That comparison isn't intended as an insult; this is a rich and rewarding family film.

It kicks off with the asteroid destined to hit Earth narrowly missing, meaning that millions of years later, humans and dinosaurs co-exist. Dino-parents Momma (Frances McDormand) and Poppa (Jeffrey Wright) are raising three kids on their farm. Gangly Arlo (Jack McGraw, and later, when he's a little older, Raymond Ochoa) is the runt of the litter, struggling to live up to his father's expectations. After tragedy strikes, Arlo finds himself lost in the wilderness, with only a feral human child named Spot for company.

A four-legged, long-necked klutz, Arlo is ostensibly an Apatosaurus, but that sort of

information isn't offered up readily; it's likely these dinosaurs will simply be classified as "the green one", "the funny one", "the scary one". The bold hues of the prehistoric creatures only make the mountainous backdrops all the more stunning. Paying homage to the Western with lush ranges and treacherous rivers, the scenery is among the most beautiful to ever spring from a computer.

That landscape certainly gives Arlo a rough time of it - battered, bruised and tormented, he's one of the more put-upon animated heroes of recent times, and some of the rival species he come across could prove a touch too scary for the youngest viewers. There's also a nice balance of adult-friendly gags thrown in with the visual humour.

Where the film really comes into its own is in Arlo's interactions with Spot. Director Peter Sohn has been upfront about this being a "boy and his dog" story, with the killer Pixar twist here being that the human is the dog. Spot is an incredible creation, skittish, snarling, scrambling around on all fours. The relationship that develops between the two has real heart, and will have you feigning grit in your eye more than once.

Certain flaws keep The Good Dinosaur from earning a spot on the Pixar podium. For all the scares thrown in en route, it never really feels like Arlo's ever that far away from home. The parental figures have a tendency to talk in platitudes, and the human/ prehistoric creatures don't feel as fresh as some other Pixar creations. But for a film of uncomplicated pleasures, there's much to delight in. Matt Maytum

To find inspiration for the landscapes, the director and DOP scouted canyons in Wyoming, and boated down Snake River



### VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN

My Fair Hunchback



RELEASED OUT NOW!

12A | 110 minutes

Director Paul McGuigan

Cast James McAvoy, Daniel Radcliffe, Andrew Scott, Jessica Brown Findlay

### • Have we reached peak

Frankenstein?

From Penny Dreadful to The Frankenstein Chronicles to Bernard Rose's imminent contemporary take - Frank3n5t31n, as the poster has it - it feels like there's a surplus of reanimated body parts out there of late.

So the fact that Victor Frankenstein opens with the words "You know this story - the crack of lightning, a mad genius, an unholy creation" feels like a clear provocation, a promise of something fresh, just as the film's title demands we shift our attention from monster to man

(surely every half-decent Frankenstein movie is the story of the man?).

Max Landis's breathless screenplay shunts the creature to the final reel, making it the pay-off rather than the premise, foregrounding the friendship between its creator and his lab assistant, Igor, a character the movie aims to reclaim from decades as a stock comedy archetype. "You're not a clown, you're a physician," Victor tells his curious new associate, looking beyond the chalk face and the Tim Burton hair.

It's Pygmalion with stolen limbs, essentially, as James McAvoy - a swaggering, devilish Victor, with just a pinch of Withnail - rescues Daniel Radcliffe's hunchback from an Elephant Man-like existence in the circus, determined to shape him into a gentleman ("Cutlery.

Use it. Wipe your hands," he commands, like Henry Higgins with a sideline in corpsebothering). It's McAvoy who powers the film, never less than magnetic and passionate. For all his goth boy melancholy Radcliffe feels just a little eclipsed by him, though he brings a nice line in blank-faced innocence, like a put-upon silent film star.

Director Paul McGuigan riffs on the inventive visual tics he pioneered on Sherlock - Victor's gaze overlays anatomical sketches on people's bodies – and relishes a good Grand Guignol shudder (a pair of eyeballs suspended in jelly twitch open, while one of Victor's early experiments is an effectively hideous collision between roadkill

### 66 There's nothing here that feels truly new 🤧

and Meccano). Andrew Scott's turn as an evangelical police inspector - flinty and understated, a world away from Moriarty allows the film to explore the rich theological implications of monster making.

There's some pleasing design work - Victor's lab is pure industrial gothic, full of steam and cogwheels, while Victorian London has a model theatre charm - and moments of swashbuckling energy and sardonic humour that lift the overfamiliar tale.

But just as the final reveal of Victor's creation echoes Dave Prowse's scarred golem in Hammer's The Horror Of Frankenstein, there's nothing here that feels truly new, that entirely persuades you this tale needed to be told again. Nick Setchfield

The hunchbacked lab assistant in 1931's Frankenstein was Fritz. The first with an Ygor was Son Of Frankenstein (1939).



### THE FORBIDDEN

RELEASED 11 DECEMBER 12A | 119 minutes

After an opening lecture on bathing, maverick director Guy Maddin's latest head trip dives into a maelstrom of giddy silent-era visions. The result unfurls like faded film stock's wayward ghost, its florid images and cheeky intertitles mixing sinking submarines, banana vampires, sentient volcanoes... Follow the lava-like flow and slippery themes emerge, given feverish allure by delirious visuals and hysterical humour. Luxuriate in it like a

### ALSO+OUT

steamy bath. Kevin Harley



Three December releases to tell you about that had yet to screen when we went to press. Sadly, we found out about **ATTACK ON TITAN** too late to give you any kind of advance heads-up. The gory anime about man-eating giants is now a two-part live-action movie; Part 1 got a theatrical release on 1 December, with selected cinemas showing both films in a double bill. Our verdict next month. Same goes for festive horrorcomedy **KRAMPUS**, in which a boy accidentally summons a Christmas demon. And then there's a certain STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS on 17 December...





HOME ENTERTAINMEN

### JESSICA 🕼 JONES Season One Darker than *Daredevil*

#### RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | N/A | Available to stream

Showrunner Melissa Rosenberg

Cast Krysten Ritter, David Tennant, Carrie-Anne Moss, Mike Colter, Rachael Taylor, Wil Traval

### NETFLIX EXCLUSIVE Daredevil had it

easy. The Man Without Fear's Netflix series may have seemed like a gamble at the time - to the mainstream audience the character was a knockoff Batman with a failed Ben Affleck movie behind him - but, well, at least he had a movie.

Jessica Jones, by contrast, is based on a more obscure comic than any so far adapted by Marvel, DC, Fox or Sony. Its titular lead (Krysten Ritter) is another superpowered hero, but she doesn't have an exciting visual, secret identity or special training. Instead, she's a broke borderline alcoholic who tried using her super-strength to help people but failed badly. Now she scratches a living as a private investigator in New York. Her front door is panelled with cardboard, her neighbours are junkies and weird (possibly incestuous) twins and

she's generally having a pretty lousy time of it. And then an old enemy, Kilgrave (David Tennant), comes back into her life - and things get a lot worse...

Kilgrave also has powers - the ability to control minds - and he previously used them on Jessica, forcing her to be his accomplice, occasional hit-woman and, yes, his lover. The full, horrible implications of that are not shied away from - in fact, the show's entire 13-episode run is focused on it. Kilgrave is the ultimate abusive ex and, unambiguously, a rapist (though smartly the show never shows this). He tries to charm and woo Jessica with contrived acts of chivalry and, when they don't work, he stalks her and begins to dismantle her world. The show puts his powers to inventively horrible use episode one ends with a girl being forced to murder her own parents in cold blood - but strip them away and he would still be a terrifying and recognisable predator. For its first few episodes, Jessica Jones feels more like a horror show than something that exists in the same universe as Rocket Raccoon.





Happily, it's not too long before Jessica decides to take the fight to Kilgrave and the series grows into a taut thriller with both sides gaining and losing the advantage as the body count racks up. Ritter is terrific in the lead role, all shadowy eyes, snark ("I don't give a bag of dicks what kinky shit you're into, just be into it quietly") and flashes of vulnerability. And while she's clearly the hero, the show doesn't paint her as whiter-than-white - she does some pretty suspect things in the pursuit of bringing Kilgrave down.

Ritter is backed up by a fine

### 66 Thrillingly visceral and frightening, but not nihilistic 99

supporting cast. Tennant plays Kilgrave with insidious charm (he's even doing his Doctor voice), Carrie-Anne Moss is steely as Hogarth, Jessica's shady sometime employer, while Rachael Taylor's

### Reviews



Patsy is this show's Foggy, bringing some much-needed warmth and humour. Then there's Mike Colter as Luke Cage. It's an excellent bit of casting, and Colter will no doubt kill it as the lead in his own show. Still, it's a bit of a shame that he's not introduced later in the run. Bringing in another superhero right at the start does slightly take away from Jessica's uniqueness.

There are other niggles. The theme music, with its wah-wah guitar, is bafflingly awful. A few clumsy references to the Avengers feel like unnecessary nods to the

canon. And some of the B-stories don't quite work - the ongoing feud between Hogarth and her ex-wife is dull, and a last-minute twist with NYPD cop Simpson (Wil Traval) comes out of the blue and goes nowhere very interesting, presumably setting up events for a second season.

These are minor gripes, though, because Jessica Jones is an otherwise remarkable programme. It's shot through with compassion and intelligence, with even minor characters growing over the course of the 13 episodes. It's thrillingly visceral (especially the

bit with the shears...) and frightening, but not childishly nihilistic. This is a world where terrible things happen, but where flawed people can make a positive difference. And while the big-screen MCU has been slow to acknowledge its female heroes, this is a show that puts the lives of three entirely believable women front and centre. With this and Daredevil, Netflix is now making the best genre shows on TV.

#### Will Salmon

Does Luke Cage's bar look familiar? Crocodile Dundee goosed a transvestite at the same location (108 Avenue B, NYC).



### BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS

Co-creator of **Jessica Jones** 



#### What are your impressions of the TV series?

→ I'm stunned by just how faithful it is to what Michael Gaydos and I did. which is a lot more faithful than I would have been! The look of the show is very different to Daredevil, but it's just as unique and exciting in its own way. It's a quite wonderful show.

#### What was the appeal for you of creating a more street-level superhero?

→ I'd already started working on Powers and I very much liked that mash-up between the crime and superhero genres. I wasn't seeing in a lot of places, as it was before series like Gotham Central and Top Ten hadn't come out yet.

#### What kind of research did you do?

→ I'd already been looking into bounty hunters and private investigators for my creator-owned comic for Caliber, Jinx. I took it so seriously that I actually considered getting my own private eve licence. but at the time in Cleveland you needed about 600 hours of detective work behind you so I didn't end up going guite that far! Stephen Jewell



HOME ENTERTAINMEN



### THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE Season One

History is rewritten for the losers



#### RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | N/A | Available to stream

Creator Frank Spotnitz

Cast Alexa Davalos, Luke Kleintank, Rupert Evans, Rufus Sewell

### **AMAZON EXCLUSIVE** Alternate

histories - especially ones involving Germany winning World War Two - are old hat in science fiction literature. The idea's gone from high-concept to pure pulp. TV has been slow to embrace the subgenre, but now we may have the show that'll define alternate history on TV, and it's as

far from pulpy as you could imagine; showrunner Frank Spotnitz has managed to produce a show even more dour than his previous hit Millennium.

It's adapted from Philip K Dick's The Man In The High Castle, a book set in 1962, after World War Two was won by the Axis powers and the United States has been carved up between the Nazis and the Japanese. (We're not sure what the Italians ended up with - the Isle of Man?) Life under fascism is hardly going to be laugh-a-minute, of course, but it's actually about a laugh a season at the current rate.

The world-building is superb. Part of the fun of the series is seeing a '60s America where Nazi rule means rock 'n' roll never happened, hemlines staved low and the teenager hasn't been invented. Some of the Nazi-fied cityscapes are a little on-the-nose, but the depiction of life in this world is often remarkably subtle and fully-realised.

There is a sci-fi story here, but it's pretty much confined to the season finale. The series is more of a Cold War thriller in a world that never was. With Hitler ailing, the uneasy truce between the Japanese

and the Nazis is threatening to crumble into World War Three. Meanwhile, an American couple eking out an existence under the Japanese, Juliana and Frank. accidentally become involved with the resistance, who are smuggling illegal films created by a mysterious individual: the man in the high castle.

It's impeccably acted and packed with vivid, multi-layered characters, gut-wrenching twists and dark, dark moments of human misery. The season does sag in the middle slightly, as the plot loses direction and becomes dependent on handy coincidences and Juliana and Frank repeatedly declaring their love for each other in scenes of sobbing intensity, then buggering off to pursue their own agendas. But the first three episodes and the final two are all of solid five-star quality, so you can happily forgive the mid-season padding. Dave Golder

Dick tried to write a sequel, but only completed two chapters. Read them in The Shifting Realities Of Philip K Dick (1995).

### Reviews



### **ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING**

Simon says



RELEASED OUT NOW! 2015 | 15/12 | Blu-ray/DVD

- Director Terry Jones
- Cast Simon Pegg, Kate Beckinsale. Sanjeev Bhaskar, Rob Riggle
- What would you do if you could wish for absolutely anything? We think we'd start by wishing this was a better film.

The most frustrating thing about Absolutely Anything is that it has so much going for it. Monty Python! Robin Williams! Directed by Terry Jones! And starring Simon Pegg, Sanjeev Bhaskar, Eddie Izzard... There's so much comic talent here and it's utterly wasted.

Aliens (voiced by the Python team) give a human (Pegg) the ability to do, well, absolutely anything for 10 days - after that, they'll decide whether or not to destroy the Earth based on how he uses his powers.

It's a fun concept that's poorly realised as Pegg bumbles along, making bad choices and causing a range of unfunny scenarios to unfold around him. The overly literal nature of the wishes causes much "hilarity". but also leads him to abandon any sensible attempts to actually improve his life or help those around them. A frustrating, confused mess.

- Extras Five mini featurettes plus six short cast/crew interviews (65 minutes) - but nothing new or riveting. Note that while the DVD's a 12, the Blu-ray features a 15-rated cut with extra swears. Rhian Drinkwater
- The aliens sit in front of a large pile of wrecked spacecraft, topped by the ship Brian falls into in Life Of Brian.



### **FANTASTIC FOUR**

Flame out



2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director Josh Trank

Cast Miles Teller, Kate Mara.

Michael B Jordan, Jamie Bell

### O If there's one thing to applaud

about the latest attempt to put Marvel's First Family on the big screen, it's that you get the feeling Josh Trank really did want to try something different. It's just that his stab at dark, gritty and real (or as real as you can go with a bloke of rock, a stretchy leader, a flying fiery hothead and a forcefieldgenerating living cloaking device) comes across as drab, dour and utterly unsatisfying. While we weren't in need of another overtly cartoony burst of silliness like the two Tim Story films, this approach overcorrects the wrong way.

And there's no getting away from the feeling that this one couldn't survive the muchreported behind-the-scenes wrangling, with changes and compromises aplenty. How else do you explain a plot that feels incredibly slow and leaden to begin with, then lurches unsteadily to a rushed action

climax that features a few sparse minutes of the characters using their abilities?

While some of the cast do their best to generate chemistry, there's a frustrating lack of convincing bonding here, except in a few patches, largely sparked by Michael B Jordan's ability to liven up dull scenes as Johnny Storm and Jamie Bell's commitment to the easy-going role of Ben Grimm. And the less said about Toby Kebbell's embarrassing hackerturned-crystalline-crackpot version of Doctor Doom the better.

It's a shame, as Trank showed real promise with Chronicle and assembled an able young cast, but nothing gels here and last-ditch attempts to fix the film only seem to have caused more problems. The result is a big-budget disaster, destined to become known as a textbook example of How Not To Reboot A Franchise.

- Extras Buy the DVD and you get one featurette (19 minutes); the Blu-ray adds three more (23 minutes), plus concept art and a trailer. James White
- This is Kate Mara's second time playing Sue Storm, after voicing the character in stopmotion sketch series Robot Chicken



### MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE -

Back in the Hunt

### \*\*\* EXTRAS \*\* RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director Christopher McQuarrie Cast Tom Cruise, Simon Pegg, Jeremy Renner, Rebecca Ferguson

With a shadowy terrorist organisation bent on world

domination, the IMF about to be shut down and its lead agent going rogue, there's no wonder Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation was hauled forward from its original December 2015 slot so as not to follow SPECTRE, given their near-identical plots.

The fifth movie in the 19-year-old franchise feels like the B-side to Brad Bird's franchise-reviving Ghost Protocol - but that's no bad thing. With a solid team finally in place (that's comic stooge Simon Pegg, scowling Jeremy Renner, Ving Rhames and his hat), it feels like a franchise that's finally found its formula and ain't messing with it. Unlike SPECTRE, there's no wobbly backstory or awkward lurches of tone - just wowsome stunts, juicy plot twists and the most luminous star of his generation at the centre of it all. Mission: Accomplished. • Extras The DVD has a commentary from Tom Cruise

and writer/director Christopher McQuarrie, plus a six-minute featurette. The Blu-ray adds six further featurettes (42 minutes). Steve O'Brien

The Syndicate, the dastardly organisation which features in the film. was regularly in the '60s TV series



### ANT-MAN

### Ruddy marvellous

RELEASED OUT NOW! 2015 | 12 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD

Director Peyton Reed

Cast Paul Rudd, Evangeline Lilly, Michael Douglas, Corey Stoll, Bobby

Cannavale, Michael Peña

#### This was the Marvel movie

many expected (perhaps even wanted) to fail. You know, the one about a diminutive hero who. while part of the original Avengers line-up, wasn't a member of the comic book A-list, and had a somewhat problematic character history. The film also attracted negativity after parting ways with its fan-favourite director, Edgar Wright, weeks ahead of shooting. The omens were not good.

We needn't have worried. After the epic action and "let's set up every Marvel movie between now and 2020!" approach of Age Of Ultron, the smaller scale of this more standalone trip to the Marvel Cinematic Universe proves very welcome indeed. It's also a hell of a lot of fun.

Indeed, the lightness of touch is what makes Ant-Man so memorable. Freed from the need to service a complex mythology (the few nods to the wider MCU are by no means integral to the plot), the movie is free to focus on the quartet of characters at its centre: genius scientist and original Ant-Man Hank Pym (Michael Douglas), his ex-con replacement Scott Lang (Paul Rudd), Pym's daughter Hope (Evangeline Lilly), and morally dubious business rival Darren Cross (Corey Stoll). The themes are far from original - father/ daughter relationships; redemption; hostile business takeovers from the *Iron Man* playbook – but they're all packaged together in a way that feels fresh and remarkably intimate. This is not so much a movie about saving the world as saving families.

It's inventive, too, from the clever heist plot (think Ocean's 11 if George Cloonev was five millimetres tall), to the hilarious dialogue ("That's one messed-up looking dog") and action sequences that make the most of Ant-Man's unique abilities. What a shame that Thomas the Tank Engine's showstopping cameo had already debuted in the trailers... **Extras** If you're looking for scurrilous gossip about Wright's departure you won't find it here. The closest you get comes in the entertaining, info-packed commentary, where Rudd (who co-wrote the movie) and director Peyton Reed make occasional references to moments/ideas that survived from Wright's script. The

### 66 The smaller scale proves very welcome \*\*\*

star/director duo also explain why the eight deleted scenes (nine minutes) failed to make the cut.

There are two featurettes: "Making Of An Ant-Sized Heist" (15 minutes) rounds up cast and crew for the standard Making Of fare, while the superior "Let's Go To The Macroverse" (eight minutes) points its microscope at the challenges involved in convincingly shrinking a man to the size of a bug. Faux news interviews from the "WHIH NewsFront" (nine minutes) provide a bit of non-essential background, while the highlight of the gag reel (three minutes) is Michael Douglas admitting "I have gas". Unfortunately, all these extras are limited to the Blu-ray releases - on the DVD you get nothing.

Richard Edwards

Evel Knievel

There were often no lenses in Ant-Man's helmet during shooting - they were added digitally, so we could see Rudd's eyes



### **GHOST STORY**

Fright Said Fred

### EXTRAS \*\*\*\* RELEASED OUT NOW! 1981 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director John Irvin

Cast Alice Krige, Fred Astaire, Melvyn Douglas, John Houseman, Douglas Fairbanks Jr

### Who really haunts this adaptation of Peter Straub's

acclaimed horror novel? The malevolent wraith whose beyond-the-grave revenge drives the tale? Or the screen ghosts of its leading men, four golden age stars flickering for the final time?

By this point Hollywood's faded greats were usually mired in disaster movie schlock like Airport '77, so Ghost Story proves a welcome graceful exit for Fred Astaire and co, cast as elderly raconteurs of shivery tales who find themselves menaced by some unfinished business from their youth.

Overwrought moments mix with subtler chills, and the great cinematographer Jack Cardiff delivers some stunning shots of a snowbound Vermont. But for all its celluloid royalty, the film belongs to future Borg Queen Alice Krige, alluring but magnificently off-kilter.

**Extras** Commentary by director John Irvin; an absorbing 40-minute interview with author Peter Straub; an insightful interview with star Alice Krige; a featurette on the film's story development; "The Visual Effects Of Albert Whitlock" - a discussion with matte photographer Bill Taylor; TV spot, radio spot, photo gallery and trailer. Nick Setchfield

FX maestro Dick Smith also created a nightmarish version of the ghost with no eyes or nose, but it was cut out.



### Reviews



### PIXELS

### Crock of sprite

\*\* EXTRAS \*\* RELEASED OUT NOW! 2015 | 12 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/

Blu-ray steelbook/DVD

Director Chris Columbus Cast Adam Sandler, Kevin James, Michelle Monaghan, Peter Dinklage, Josh Gad, Sean Bean

### There's a neat germ of an

idea for a fun movie here - what a pity it never actually grows into a fun movie.

The planet is being attacked by aliens in the form of characters from '80s arcade games: Pac-Man, Centipede, Donkey Kong and so on. Recruited to save Earth are a trio of expert gamers from back in the day, one of whose mates (Kevin James) has, somewhat surprisingly, become President and is directing defences. Actually, scratch "somewhat surprisingly" and make that "absolutely

ridiculously": it sums up the gleeful idiocy of Pixels.

Also characteristic of the film's silliness and laziness is the way the battles with the invaders are very literal re-interpretations of how the games were - the Pac-Man battle in particular makes no sense. It all boils down to characters shooting things with big guns. Ghostbusters got away with it - Pixels crashes at the loading stage.

**Extras** On the DVD, just two featurettes (seven minutes) and a Good Charlotte music video. Blu-ray buyers get a further six featurettes (19 minutes). Four of these look at specific sequences; the others concern cameo roles for Pac-Man creator Toru Iwatani and a competition winner. Russell Lewin

Look out for a cameo from a certain computer-generated '80s music presenter well known for his shades and sharp suits.



RELEASED OUT NOW! 1987 | 15 | Blu-ray

BLU-RAY DEBUT A heavy-handed,

but entertaining, '80s satire. It's 2017 and Sam Treadwell's (David Andrews) sexbot is broken. He enlists a tracker (Melanie Griffith) to help find a replacement in a danger zone.

The ultra-sexualised future is well-realised, but the third-act shift into action is more generic and less effective, despite Tim Thomerson (as the villain) sneering and snarling his way through the script.

Extras Director's commentary; a recent interview with Thomerson; a period Making Of; trailers. Will Salmon



EXTRAS \*\*\* RELEASED OUT NOW! 1995 | PG | DVD

Hailing from the dark days before Doctor Who's revival, this DTV spin-off features Sarah Jane, '60s companion Victoria and the Brigadier - and introduces his daughter, Kate...

The continuity-clogged story sees the Great Intelligence plotting a return via a cult-run university. It's horribly talky, its mangy-looking Yeti are a sorry sight, and it largely boils down to a dreary McGuffin hunt. Take a snifter whenever someone hisses, "Where is the locus?" and you might get through it.

• Extras Making Of stuff (85 minutes). Ian Berriman



EXTRAS RELEASED OUT NOW! 2014 | 18 | DVD/VOD

Ignore the "Eli Roth

presents" tag; this is nothing like any of the Hostel director's films. Instead of extreme gore and snappy dialogue, you get a thoughtful take on vampire mythology, where bloodsuckers are plague victims rather than suave monsters.

It's a bit too miserable for its own good, though, and trying to sub in a (beautiful-looking) Chile for small-town Canada is a weird decision that falls flat.

Let The Right One In is plainly an influence, but it's just not as convincing.

Extras None, Sarah Dobbs



### **PRISONERS**

RELEASED OUT NOW! 1983 | PG | Blu-ray/DVD (dual format)

From the director and producer of Hawk The Slayer, but with less money... need to know any more? Okav.

It's Lidl sci-fi, made in South Africa. It pretends to be SF, using technobabble and 8-bit graphics to get BSG's Richard Hatch to another universe, but once there it's Hawk The Slayer 2: cringingly poor fantasy with men in green body paint and casual sexism.

Extras Trailer. Dave Golder

HOME ENTERTAINMENT



### THE X-FILES The Collector's Set

Mulder and Scully go high-def

\*\*\*\* EXTRAS \*\*\* RELEASED OUT NOW! 1993-2002 | 18 | Blu-ray Creator Chris Carter Cast Gillian Anderson, David

Duchovny, Mitch Pileggi, William B Davis, Annabeth Gish, Robert Patrick BLU-RAY DEBUT The thought that

there could be people reading this review who weren't even born when The X-Files' first episode aired on 10 September 1993 inspires horror. Because the idea of anybody not having seen the series, and not understanding just how goddamn important it was in terms of sci-fi history - hell, television history - is too hideous to contemplate.

The X-Files was like nothing that had been seen on prime time US TV before. Sure, there'd been a few shows to inspire it - Kolchak, The Twilight Zone, Twin Peaks - but there was something about the way creator Chris Carter took a police-procedural format and injected fantasy into it that made everything look different. The X-Files wasn't a cop show; it wasn't a supernatural show. It was an amalgam of both genres. Today, we see this kind of series on the box all the time, but back then it was extraordinary.

Then there were the characters: Gillian Anderson's sceptical Scully, ready to pooh-pooh any UFO sighting or werewolf kill, and David Duchovny's laconic, driven Mulder, king of the one-liners, who lost his sister to aliens as a kid. The show lost a lot of oomph

when both actors scaled down their roles in later seasons. replaced by Robert Patrick and Annabeth Gish, but the quality of the scripts never waned despite the loss of their charms.

Then there were the monsters: hundreds of the buggers, all weirder than the last, sucking brains or infecting innocents with hideous diseases, grossing out audiences who had yet to see a corpse on CSI. The X-Files was a blast. It was funny, gory, thoughtful, complicated, silly, scary and even sexy, and changed television forever. If you haven't seen it you really should.

If you have, whether or not you want to buy this box set may depend on how much of a purist you are. In some instances it's

been necessary to create "faithful" new visual effects where original footage was not available. More significantly: the first five seasons were aired in 4:3 ratio, with the series switching to widescreen from season six. For this release, Fox have gone back to the film materials for those early years and made 1.78:1 transfers – so expect "extra" picture left and right. Chris Carter does say they composed the show with widescreen in mind pretty much from the start, though... the decision is yours. • Extras If you're looking for new, specially filmed retrospective documentaries on the success of the show, you'll be disappointed. But the original extras (all carried over from the DVD box sets) aren't to be sniffed at, with commentaries galore, deleted scenes, featurettes and profiles - even if the only actor to pop up on a yack track is Robert Patrick in season eight's "Within".

Javne Nelson

The box set also includes space for a disc of the new series (when it comes out). All nine seasons are also available separately.

### Reviews



### **FUTURE SHOCK!** THE STORY OF 2000 AD

All That Zariaz



2015 | E | DVD

Director Paul Goodwin Contributors Pat Mills, Dave Gibbons, Kevin O'Neill, Neil Gaiman

Urged into existence by the promise of Star Wars and crackling with an upstart punk-era energy, 2000 AD didn't so much arrive in 1977 as detonate, an explosive new dream-fuel for a generation.

This documentary celebrates nearly four decades of Britain's most vital contribution to the comics world. There's an impressive, engagingly frank array of talking heads, from key talent (Nemesis The Warlock's Kevin O'Neill declares "We were a gang of reprobates") to creators caught more fleetingly in the comic's orbit (Neil Gaiman weeps for Alan Moore's unfinished Halo Jones saga). There's a place, too, for fans in the music world, from Anthrax to Portishead.

Punctuated by cool animated interludes that bring original panels to life, Future Shock! favours a thematic approach over a strictly historical one. At the heart of it all is original editor Pat Mills, on fine form, his undimmed anger and energy clearly the true creative engine behind The Galaxy's Greatest Comic.

- CEXTRAS An e-comic featuring the first printed stories of 10 classic characters. Nick Setchfield
- Judge Dredd was originally the name of an occult detective strip that never made the comic's pages



### FEAR THE WALKING **DEAD** Season One The times before Grimes

EXTRAS \*\* RELEASED OUT NOW! 2015 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD Creators Robert Kirkman, Dave

Erickson

Cast Kim Dickens, Cliff Curtis, Frank Dillane, Alycia Debnam-Carey

A prequel spin-off of The

Walking Dead? Ain't that the definition of pointlessness? After all, the very thing which made AMC's ratings juggernaut feel fresh is that it skips the whole tired business of the zombie outbreak to focus on the postapocalyptic aftermath.

For much of its duration, this first run of six episodes validates that sceptical pre-judgement. Pretty though the series' chiming score and arty use of slow-mo are, early on it feels dreadfully slow. The dysfunctional dynamics of its central family - mum Madison, junkie/Poundshop Johnny Depp Nick, sis Alicia and stepdad Travis - are pretty dreary, plus they can be a frustratingly thick-headed bunch (when they sit down to play Monopoly instead of boarding up the windows, you despair). And when the streets do erupt in violence it all feels a mite tuppenny-ha'penny. When characters trapped inside a barber shop peer through a slot at the rioting outside it's hard not to think of the old cliché of the B-movie which, unable to muster the budget for a battle, has characters peeking through a tent flap to provide running commentary.

Stick with it, however, and your patience is eventually rewarded. The arrival of the army at the end of episode three steers the franchise into previously unexplored territory. Episode five brings the series' first fascinating character in the shape of the dapper, amoral Strand (Colman Domingo). And the barnstorming season-closer finally kicks out the jams.

- **Extras** Just a four-minute promo and an even shorter bit on the characters. Ian Berriman
- Absent from this release: plane-based 16-part web series *Flight 462* one character from which will feature in season two.



### **ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS**

That Friday feeling

\*\*\* RELEASED OUT NOW!

1964 | PG | Blu-ray/DVD (dual format) Director Byron Haskin

Cast Paul Mantee, Victor Lundin. Adam West, Barney the monkey

 A bloke stranded on Mars. relying on his ingenuity to survive? Nowt new about that, Matt Damon. It's the highconcept here too, as astronaut Kit Draper whips up everything from an alarm clock to rudimentary bagpipes.

The science isn't *quite* so rigorous. To be fair, we knew less about Mars in 1964, but there's much that's hard to swallow: Draper only needs occasional tokes of oxygen, and soon finds food and water, thanks to monkey companion Mona. Later, in echoes of Defoe's novel, he acquires a second - an escaped slave.

The location work is impressive, with Death Valley providing stunning Martian vistas, attractively photographed by The Searchers alumnus Winton C Hoch. And the growing bond between our hero and his "Friday" works well too - although the latter stages, which see them pursued by slaver spaceships reminiscent of the Martian craft from The War Of The Worlds (same director and designer!) feel like trad adventure fare compared to what came before. **Extras** New, informative commentary by an expert on

As the monkey playing Mona was male, it had to wear a furry nappy to hide its genitals during filming.

screenwriter Ib Melchior;

trailer; booklet. Ian Berriman



HOME ENTERTAINMENT

### THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES EXT Ed

Baggy End



RELEASED OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD

- Director Peter Jackson
- Cast Martin Freeman, Richard Armitage, Ian McKellen, Orlando Bloom, Evangeline Lilly, Luke Evans
- The backlash against the

Hobbit trilogy has been surprisingly vicious, but not unexpected. While it's true that a tale as slight as Tolkien's original novel didn't need to be told over 10 hours, The Battle Of The Five Armies features some of the most inventive and entertaining moments in any Middle-earth movie. And while the Hobbit Extended Editions

haven't felt as definitive as the longer cuts of The Lord Of The Rings, this one is a worthy upgrade.

Roughly 10 minutes have been added. Most of the pre-battle extensions are minor, but meaningful: Radagast giving Gandalf his staff, Bofur catching Bilbo sneaking out at the gates of Erebor, Thorin stalling for time before Dáin's arrival... The majority of the new footage comes during the battle itself, and boy is it bloody. It's so violent that you might want to vet it before showing it to young 'uns, with mass Orc decapitations accompanied by fountains of necrotic fluid. There's a brilliant

battle between the Dwarves and the Elves, Gandalf fights a troll, Alfrid gets a satisfying send-off and there's a great gag involving the axe in Bifur's head. Best of all is the spectacular chariot sequence. Glimpsed briefly in the trailer, it's huge fun and arguably the highlight of the entire battle. Extras Around 10 hours of insanely in-depth Making Ofs spread across three discs (plus commentary by Jackson and co-writer Philippa Boyens and a few fun featurettes). The bulk (four and a half hours) is dedicated to the main shoot, with 90 minutes for pickups and three and a half



hours of assorted bits and bobs. Those first two (parts 11 and 12 of the Appendices) are exemplary consistently insightful and surprisingly emotional, and not iust because the late Christopher Lee and Andrew Lesnie put in brief appearances. The third chunk is a little more problematic. Clearly assembled from off-cuts that didn't make it into the Appendices, it feels unfocused and occasionally covers the same ground as the main doc. There's some great stuff. but it doesn't feel essential.

If you're a Rings fan who has skipped the *Hobbit Extended* Editions so far, this is well worth a watch just to see Ian McKellen's final moments as Gandalf and the team that crafted the finest fantasy movies ever made at their most confident and capable. Jordan Farley

Most shots of Gandalf's staff in battle had to be digitally replaced - he was wielding the wrong one for three days' shooting.



### TED 2

Grin and bear it



### O As far as high-concept comedies go, Ted was a treat:

sharp, acerbic and wonderfully weird. Ted 2 is a classic case of a cash-in sequel.

After being branded property by the state, Ted takes the fight for his civil rights to court with the help of his Thunder Buddy John and Amanda Sevfried's stoner lawyer Sam. But the film never embraces this courtroom drama conceit, and quickly descends into a tedious road movie. The humour is cruder than ever - at one point they travel to a sperm bank, the punchline wearingly predictable - while Sam only exists to lust over John.

A late-in-the-day fight sequence at New York Comic Con is good fun, with lots of geeky sight gags, and there are some superb, irreverent cameos, but ultimately it's a letdown - overlong, lacking laughs and missing the magic that made Ted a surprise hit. Extras Commentary by MacFarlane, two co-writers and star Jessica Barth; four minutes of duff deleted scenes: a grating gag reel; and a selection of uninspiring featurettes on the Ted/John relationship, creating NY Comic Con, the cameos, the opening dance number and the roadtrip. Jordan Farley

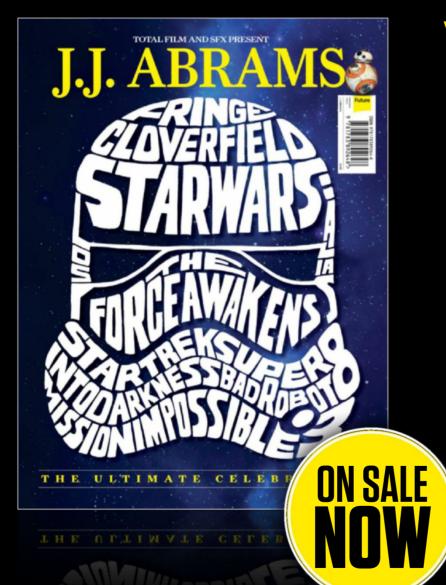
Patrick Warburton's Guy dresses as the Tick at NY Comic Con. Warburton played the Tick in the 2001 TV series.





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### THE MAN FROM UNCLE

### Undercover and underwhelming

### EXTRAS \*\*\* RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director Guy Ritchie Cast Henry Cavill. Armie Hammer.

Alicia Vikander, Elizabeth Debicki

#### What the chuff is this?!

Ostensibly a reimagining of the '60s spy-fi TV series, The Man From UNCLE is one of 2015's most curious films.

Whereas we all know James Bond inside out, with UNCLE most folk are pretty much blank. But even if you know the original it doesn't matter, because this is nothing like it. Yes, during the Cold War American spy Napoleon Solo and Russian spy Illya Kuryakin team up to fight a world

threat, but Guy Ritchie's version is a title in search of a film.

It's a movie all dressed up with nowhere to go. It has the class of a '60s Sunday Times supplement but unfortunately also replicates the ennui of a slow Sunday afternoon. The suits scream style, the screen sometimes splits, even the subtitles look luscious, but it's not exciting, it's not sexy, and it has no real personality. Quite why it exists is its biggest mystery.

• Extras The DVD just has one seven-minute featurette. The Blu-ray has five more (about half an hour's worth), on subjects such as "recreating '60s cool". Russell Lewin

Napoleon Solo's also the name of a crime boss in *Goldfinger* - lan Fleming was involved in developing the TV series.

### **MOBILE SUIT** GUNDAM

Robot Wars

EXTRAS \*\* RELEASED OUT NOW! (Part One)/TBC January (Part Two)

- 1979-1980 PG Blu-ray Director Yoshiyuki Tomino
- Cast Shuuichi Ikeda, Tohru Furuva. Hirotaka Suzuoki, Rumiko Ukai

#### Debuting in Britain in two

Blu-ray volumes (released a month apart). Mobile Suit Gundam is a true landmark of anime and TV SF. Like vintage British telefantasy, this 1979 serial takes a budget that probably wouldn't cover the first shot of Star Wars and creates an epic space opera, bulging with battles in space and across a war-torn Earth.

Ostensibly made for kids, Gundam doesn't have evil aliens or Darth Vaders. Instead, it presents a human war with no clear right or wrong, letting us cross the lines and engage with both sides. Plus it has masses of giant robots.

Geeky Amuro is a boy inventor whose space colony becomes a battlefield in the first episode. The lad tumbles into the driver's seat of an experimental military robot, the eponymous Gundam. His rival is Char (pronounced "Shar"), a wily, brilliant young commander on the enemy side who rides a mean robot himself, and is irked by the newbie combatant.

To enjoy Gundam you have to be tolerant of old TV animation. The show looks far livelier than most American TV cartoons of the '70s (and indeed '80s), but it still



looks dated and often crude, especially in the big battle scenes. As a story, it's tightest and most exciting in the early episodes; later on, the series gets plodding in places. But it works hard to build compelling character arcs. It also saves some of its biggest moments for the end, taking Amuro into paranormal, psychedelic territory. In the end, Gundam is a hugely

satisfying watch - a show you sense was as much an epic journey for its creators as it was for its cartoon heroes.

• Extras Part One has clean credits only. Part Two will include a "30th anniversary staff interview". Andrew Osmond

English-language editions of Gundam (including this one) omit episode 15, at the studio's request. It doesn't affect the story

# Reviews



# THE REFLECTING

Kermit cruelty



1990 | 15 | Steelbook Blu-ray (Zavvi exclusive)

Director Philip Ridley

Cast Lindsay Duncan, Viggo

Mortensen, Jeremy Cooper

# **BLU-RAY DEBUT** British director

Philip Ridley's debut feature is in love with the iconography of the American heartland. This is a landscape where the skies are always blue, the corn fields a Van Gogh yellow and the local widow. Dolphin Blue (Lindsay Duncan), is as glamorous as a movie star.

But scratch the surface and this rural idyll reveals its gruesome nature. In the opening scene the young protagonist, Seth Dove (Jeremy Cooper), explodes a frog in a gory equivalent of Blue Velvet's severed ear on the lawn. It's unsubtle but effective.

Fantastical elements are

minimal - Seth is convinced

that Dolphin is a vampire - but this is certainly a horror movie. It's filled with grotesqueries from the whale bones that Dolphin keeps to the dead baby that the kids discover. With a lively score by Nick Bicât, it's a surreal and disturbing look at the horrors of childhood. • Extras A quality behind-thescenes documentary; a look at the director's second feature, The Passion Of Darkly Noon. There's also a director's commentary, two early shorts (both very odd), and some

The line "You've been exploding frogs again" was sampled by post-industrial band Coil on "Omlagus Garfungiloops".

trailers. Will Salmon



# SINISTER 2 Time to Bughuul off?

EXTRAS \*\*\* RELEASED 28 DECEMBER 2015 | 15 | DVD/Blu-ray/Download

Director Ciarán Fov Cast James Ransone, Shannyn

Sossamon, Robert Daniel Sloan

Sinister's cleverness was both the best and worst thing about it. The way it revealed its villain's fiendish plan was creepy, but it

also felt over-engineered. This sequel doesn't have that problem - while it's still overly convoluted. it's also really, really stupid.

James Ransone, who played the goofy nameless deputy in the first movie, has been brought back and shoved into the lead role (though annoyingly he still hasn't got a name). "Ex-Deputy So And So" is now a private detective who burns down murder houses to stop the demonic Bughuul claiming more victims. But a new family has

66 Few surprises and even fewer scares 99

moved into one of the houses, and the kids are already having sleepovers with Bughuul's army of undead tweens.

old grot mags.

Since there's no mystery left to the demon's MO, Sinister 2 has to scrabble for a new twist. And yeah, there's some fun in the idea that it's moving out of, not into, a haunted house that's dangerous, but once the domestic abuse subplot kicks in it's obvious where things are going. There are few surprises and even fewer scares; Bughuul was never the most frightening movie monster, but here he's so ineffectual he might as well have taken the week off.

It's clichéd, dull and laboured. with a dark but sloppy aesthetic. As a movie lover, you'd imagine even Bughuul would be disappointed with this nonsense. • Extras Ten minutes of boring deleted scenes; full-length versions of all the "kill films" from the movie, plus a competition-winning short in the same style; a 10-minute Making Of doc; and an audio commentary with director Ciarán Foy. Sarah Dobbs

The bright green "Bughuul juice" that's used to poison his victims is actually the liquid from inside glow sticks

# ROUND UP



HALO: THE FALL OF REACH (out now, Blu-ray/ DVD/VOD) is less about said ill-fated colony world more the tale of Master Chief's early years, taking in the childhood brutalities of Spartan training and his first encounter with the Covenant. Ender's Game-lite, basically. Reasonably engaging, in a sleepy Sunday afternoon way, albeit hamstrung by distractingly stiff, '90s-style CG, and an inconsistent, painterly art style that's all pastoral loveliness one moment, nightmarish, PS2-style ombie faces the next. In

UNDER THE DOME SEASON THREE (out now, Blu-ray/DVD), the increasingly desperate Stephen King series which ran out of ideas about half an episode after the dome came down - looks like a show begging to be cancelled. It got its wish by producing a season that reveals (spoilers!) that the dome is the product of evil bodysnatching aliens. Cue a series of increasingly ludicrous B-movie clichés and overwrought acting. Don't get too excited

about the EDWARD SCISSORHANDS 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

(out now, Blu-ray) as there are no new extras - just the commentaries, period featurette and trailers from the previous Blu-ray. The one reason to double-dip: a new 4K transfer with better detail than the old HD release. Finally, a Scarlett Johansson movie is in the works but 20-year-old cyber-cop franchise Ghost In The Shell lives on in pan: GHOST IN THE

SHELL ARISE: BORDERS 3 & 4 (out now, Blu-ray/ DVD) is the second volume of the latest revamp, featuring younger versions of the characters



# THE THING ITSELF

When SF gets philosophical



RELEASED 17 DECEMBER

352 pages | Paperback/Ebook

Author Adam Roberts

Publisher Gollancz

### When Adam Roberts

announced The Thing Itself to the world via his blog back in August, he chose a humorous tone. "It's the novelisation of Kant's Critique Of Pure Reason the world has been waiting for," he joked. "Also, it solves the Fermi Paradox. You're welcome."

If nothing else, you have to give Roberts full marks for ambition, but it was ever thus. Most notably when conjuring up the paranoia of the USSR and its rulers in his most impressive novel to date, Yellow Blue Tibia (2009) - a book that riffed off how elastic the concept of truth can be in totalitarian societies - Roberts has consistently produced books that play with form and employ lit-fic techniques. Maybe that isn't so surprising. His day job, after all, is as a professor of literature at Royal Holloway, University of London.

He's a man who refuses to play the genre game in another crucial way too, preferring to write distinct standalone novels rather

than a space opera or epic fantasy sequence that can be promoted with the reassuringly exciting words, "With this trilogy, Adam Roberts offers his unique and revolutionary take on [insert your own subgenre here]."

This is clearly admirable, and yet there's a flipside to all of this. Could it be that Roberts is in danger of getting labelled as a writers' writer, or even, god forbid, a critics' writer? Could it be that his jocular tone in announcing *The* Thing Itself betraved a sense of unease rooted in the idea that some readers might think Roberts a bit too clever for his own good?

If so, these readers are missing out, because while The Thing Itself certainly isn't without flaws, it's a fine novel, where it turns out Roberts was jokingly serious about the book's ambitious intent.

66 You have to give Roberts full marks for ambition 99

Primarily through the troubled relationship between two scientists, Roy and Charles (one violently insane), whom we first meet in an Antarctic research station, Roberts is intent on exploring the metaphysics of German philosopher Immanuel Kant, in particular the notion that we can't "step outside' our humanity" to see the universe objectively because, "Human consciousness is defined by reality, and reality is defined by human consciousness, both at the same time."

If that sounds confusing, well, nobody ever said Kant's work was easy and, perhaps inevitably, even as Roberts conjures up a narrative involving time-travelling "ghosts", the birth of an AI, a secretive institute and a future "Utopia", there are more than a few scenes where people spend much time discussing philosophy, to the point where the dialogue can start to seem like exposition.

However, this never overwhelms the book. That's partly because Roberts is smart enough to ally the talkiest scenes to sections driven by a chase narrative. But it's also because The Thing Itself isn't just one linear story. Instead, it jumps around in time, with stories from one era finding echoes in other eras.

If that calls to mind David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas, the comparison is apposite. To return to the idea of Roberts using lit-fic techniques and not playing by genre rules, he's rising to the challenge that Mitchell sets down, which is in so many respects the '60s New Wave challenge of writing unsettling fiction that goes beyond both realism and genre to push to somewhere new.

This time around, Roberts doesn't quite make it - bits of the book are ragged. However, this is a heroic partial success (that's the glass-half-full version of heroic failure) that involves not just solving the Fermi Paradox (well, sort of...) but, if not quite proving that God exists, at least offering some good reasons to suggest we should seriously consider the possibility the supreme deity isn't dead. Jonathan Wright

The Fermi Paradox is the contradiction between the seemingly high probability of alien life and the lack of evidence for it.



Asteroid action

# \*\*\*

RELEASED OUT NOW!

298 pages | Paperback/Ebook Author John Ayliff Publisher Harper Voyager

# DHow traditional do you like

your space opera? Author John Ayliff clearly likes his pretty damn trad, even going so far as to feature a genuine space pirate in his debut novel. However, while this dark SF thriller is sometimes retro to a mind-boggling degree, it's also a solid mix of character-driven intrigue and adventure.

In a bleak future alien machines known as Worldbreakers have devastated the solar system, destroying every planet. The remnants of humanity now struggle to survive in the remaining asteroid belts, but when runaway clone Jonas has his ship hijacked by pirate Keldra, he's dragged into her dangerous quest to fight back against the Worldbreakers...

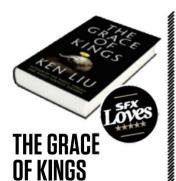
Avliff's worldbuilding occasionally lacks freshness, but he counters this by delivering nuts-and-bolts space drama and giving the plot a mounting sense of tension and momentum. His biggest strength is characterisation, with the book's two protagonists evolving a difficult, believable relationship as the stakes get higher; this leads to a surprisingly emotional climax. A satisfying space opera that's enjoyable enough to allow you to forgive its occasionally over-traditional flavour.

Saxon Bullock

Ayliff spent the last decade in the games industry, working as a writer on projects like MMO RuneScape.

# Reviews

# The Best New Novellas!



Blood brothers



RELEASED OUT NOW!

640 pages | Hardback/Ebook

Author Ken Liu

Publisher Head Of Zeus

The first in a new, boldly

different epic fantasy series, The Grace Of Kings is a change of pace from your regular hero's journey-led western fantasy.

Set in the island kingdoms of Dara, the story takes you through the decades of two boys' lives. Kuni Garu is a commoner who'd rather slack off, but knows he could be doing so much more. Mata Zyndu is the last son of a noble house, with natural martial prowess and an unwavering sense of justice. Born in very different stations the two become as close as brothers when rebellion breaks out. Together they - along with numerous but very memorable side characters - shall challenge an empire and a whole way of life.

Beyond ambitious in scope, The Grace Of Kings may be daunting at first, but soon you are swept into a world of political intrigue, hopeless sieges and compelling characters. Liu seamlessly blends philosophy and politics with tense battles and compelling action. The silkpunk, Chinese-inspired setting is a breath of fresh air. Sad, funny, poignant and addictive, this book will leave a lasting impression on the genre.

**Bridie Roman** 

Ken Liu translated Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem*, winner of this year's Hugo award for Best Novel.



# THE FLICKER MEN

Uncertain future



RELEASED OUT NOW!

352 pages | Hardback/Ebook Author Ted Kosmatka

Publisher Michael Joseph

DEric Argus is washed up, a

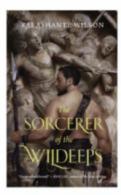
once brilliant quantum physicist who's succumbed to booze. Then comes a second chance. An old friend hires Argus to work at Hansen, a prestigious lab, and Argus decides to recreate Feynman's double-slit experiment, which showed how electrons behave as both a particle and a wave.

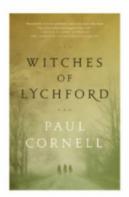
Which is when Argus's life starts to go even more awry, as his results appear to reveal the existence of the human soul and its lack in some. Soon, he finds himself pursued by violent and well-resourced forces.

If there's something a little Dan Brown about the set-up to Ted Kosmatka's third novel, don't worry, it's mostly just the conspiracies whispering to you from the shadows. A far closer analogy is with Michael Crichton, as Kosmatka uses an airport thriller narrative of setpiece violence, noble sacrifice and bad-ass baddies to sneak in ideas about the nature of reality - or, more accurately, different realities.

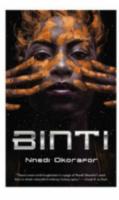
There's the odd hokev moment in the final 50 pages as Kosmatka tries to resolve different plot strands, but it's an impressive novel nonetheless, with Argus a resourceful semi-hero forever caught between doing the right thing and pissing his life up against the wall. Jonathan Wright

Kosmatka used to work in a research lab. Using their electron microscope inspired the story this expands upon





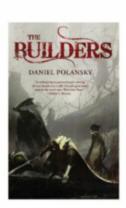


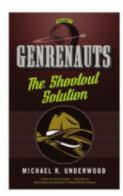


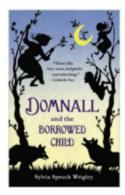












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# I AM SLAUGHTER

Beastly behaviour



RELEASED 17 DECEMBER

237 pages | Hardback/Ebook

Author Dan Abnett

Publisher Black Library

### Beasts both literal and

metaphorical are in the ascendancy in I Am Slaughter, the first instalment of Black Library's new event series The Beast Arises.

It's set in the millennium following the Horus Heresy, with the traitorous Space Marine legions but a distant memory. While the galaxy isn't at peace (c'mon, this is Warhammer), all is relatively quiet. The loyal legions, now disbanded into much smaller chapters, are engaged in more mundane tasks. For the Imperial Fists, this includes seemingly routine bug hunts on planets such as Ardamantua. Of course, it doesn't take long for matters to head south, and if you're familiar with Warhammer 40,000, it'll be no surprise at all when the you-know-whats turn up...

**66** Human intrigue keeps it enjoyable ""

What is unexpected, though, is the degree to which the political machinations on Terra fascinate. It's here that Dan Abnett lifts IAmSlaughter out of the hack 'n' slash mire. With the Emperor all but a psychic turnip on life support, the 12 High Lords ruling in his place are behaving like five-year-olds at a birthday buffet, jostling for the biggest slice of cake. Abnett brings them to life admirably, creating compelling and believable characters that are a thrill to meet - especially in the case of Drakan Vangorich, who will become one of W40k lore's pivotal figures.

In fact, it's a shame that you don't get to spend more time in the company of the High Lords, because their tale is by far the more interesting of I Am Slaughter's twin strands. The action on Ardamantua, on the other hand, turns into a barely-resolved slog, iust for the pay-off of setting up that plotline's arc for the next novel. The human intrigue is enough to keep it enjoyable though, and with prose that's far less dense and obstructive than that found in the Horus Heresy books, this is an opening act that promises plenty of excitement to follow. Michael Abolins-Farrell

There'll be 12 books in the series, one every month. The next four are by Rob Sanders. Gav Thorpe, David Annandale and Guy Haley



# ONEIROS

Don't go to sleep...

#### RELEASED OUT NOW!

640 pages | Paperback/Ebook Author Markus Heitz

Publisher Jo Fletcher Books

# © Konstatin Korff, central

character in Oneiros, is a little unusual - and not just because he's Europe's leading undertaker. Credit has to be given to Markus Heitz for creating a different sort of supernatural being, and as Konstantin's exact nature isn't revealed until well into the book we won't say much about it here. Konstantin has tried to leave his kind behind, but his condition prevents him living fully among normal people, and he gets involved once more in the activities of other "Death Sleepers".

The action is well-paced, and there are some suitably tense scenes - especially close to the start where you know something awful is going to happen on a plane, but aren't sure when, how, or who will be responsible. It zips between exotic locations like a Bond film, complete with car chases and gunfights. However, the characters are poorly created. Even the major ones feel like a conglomeration of clichés, and every single female one gets described in terms of her attractiveness (including a crucial corpse).

As for the romantic element, it feels both unrealistic and horribly predictable. Great if you like pacy adventures, not so good if you love good characterisation. Miriam McDo

Heitz's other current project: ebook serial AERA: The Return Of The Gods. It features Odin, Zeus and Shiva.

# A BOOK IN

BULLET POINTS



# BOND VS BOND

RELEASED OUT NOW!

195 pages | Hardback Author Paul Simpson Publisher Race Point

- Subtitled The Many Faces Of 007, this book looks at the different interpretations of James Bond on page and screen.
- It starts with a potted biography of Ian Fleming on his death *The* Guardian unwisely intoned: "007 has bitten the dust."
- Bond's attitudes and behaviour in each book are studied in turn. In Moonraker, for instance, it's said that when not on assignment he works in an office weekdays between 10 and 6.
- There are bits on cars, guns, girls, gadgets, music, villains, the Bond comic strip, audio productions and non-Fleming novels ever heard of 1967's The Adventures Of James Bond Junior 003 1/27
- While much of it is synopsis-heavy, the book's full of good pictures and the author clearly knows his stuff.
- One of several non-fiction Bond books recently released: others include James Bond Cars, The Making Of Casino Royale (1967) and Behind The Scenes Of SPECTRE.



# Reviews



# SPINNING THORNS

Fairytale romance



#### RELEASED 10 DECEMBER

368 pages | Paperback/Ebook

- Author Anna Sheehan
- Publisher Gollancz

### • Happily ever after is all

very well. But what happens after the princess awakes and the storytellers head home?

The kingdom of Lyndaria is struggling. After the hundredyear "interregnum" the economy is ruined, the land is still beholden to a greedy king and the killer thorns around the palace are not any friendlier now the princess is awake. Sleeping Beauty is married with two children, but younger daughter Willow ("Will") is not a happy royal: ungainly, in love with her sister's fiancé and practising magic in a country still suspicious of it. Searching for spells, she meets a fellow magician, who she thinks of as "Reynard", but who's actually a Nameless faerie, persecuted and homeless and blaming the royals for all the hardships his family has endured.

Slow to start but quickly captivating, this beyond-thefairytale romance features two people both unhappy but still dedicated to something more than themselves. And while Reynard's rage against Will and her family never quite feels as passionate as it's described, their developing friendship feels sweet and raw and real. There's nothing startlingly new and original here, but there's a compelling fairytale for those who like to peek beyond the ever after. Rhian Drinkwater

Sheehan's first YA novel, *A Long, Long Sleep*, also riffed on *Sleeping Beauty*, with a girl waking up after 62 years.



# SKYBORN

Blue sky thinking



#### **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

464 pages | Paperback/Ebook Author David Dalglish

Publisher Orbit

# • Humanity has fled the

surface of the Earth and is living on floating islands in the sky. Constant civil war plagues these islands, with the last bastions of humanity bickering over limited resources and old vendettas.

One such skirmish claims the lives of Breanna and Kael Skyborn's parents, Seraphim warriors who fight while flying, harnessing the power of the elements to battle their enemies. This sets the Skyborn twins on a path to follow in their parents' footsteps and join the academy where they will learn how to engage in deadly aerial warfare.

One part *Harry Potter*, one part *Hunger Games*, this is your average YA fare, with everything you'd expect from a magic flying school full of teenagers, ruled (in all but name) by a controlling central government. The characters are likeable but uninspired and the romance, while predictable, is sweet.

The pacing seems a little slow for the first three quarters of the book, though it does eventually pick up, and the finale promises a much more action-packed sequel. But it's the unique setting and magic system that help keep *Skyborn* aloft – they're every bit as exciting as they sound.

**Bridie Roman** 

Skyborn was inspired by the land of Zeal in Dalglish's favourite videogame: Chrono Trigger on the Super Nintendo.

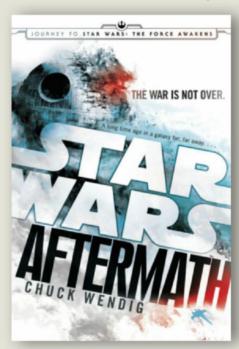
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# Reviews Get sci-fi news, reviews and features at gamesradar.com/sfx



# **BOY 23**

Lost in a forest

# \*\*\*

#### RELEASED OUT NOW!

352 pages | Paperback/Ebook

- Author Jim Carrington
- Publisher Bloomsbury

# • We're used to post-

apocalyptic stories set in worlds governed by evil corporations, devastated by natural disasters or destroyed by plagues. It takes some seriously bad luck to live in a world in which the three have combined - but bad luck seems to be the general way of life for little Jesper, aka Boy 23.

After a horrific meteorite strike unleashed a deadly Marsh Flu, the money-grabbing Huber corporation imprisoned Jesper - possibly patient zero - in a room for his entire life. When he's unexpectedly kidnapped and released in a forest, he has to go on the run... which is tricky, given that he's never seen another human being. One thing he is good at, though, is healing himself when he's hurt - and given that he can't seem to stay out of trouble, that's rather handy.

Boy 23 is a rattlingly good read, although occasionally clichéd (an orphanage run by nasty priests, for example) and the way it switches between characters can be choppy. Still, it's given poignancy by its location (Bohemia, hence everybody speaks German cue parallels to Nazism) and a rather nifty twist or two along the way. And as for the sheltered Jesper himself, his worldview is fascinating. Intriguing storytelling.

#### Jayne Nelson

Boy 23 was inspired by stories of "wild children", most notably a German boy found in a forest in 1828.



# WE ARE THE MARTIANS



# **Making Fans For Nigel**

# \*\*\*\*

# RELEASED TBC January

470 pages | Paperback Editor Neil Snowdon

Publisher Spectral Press

### O Nigel Kneale was "a prophet

without honour", according to Mark Gatiss, one of many distinguished contributors to this weighty volume on the creator of Quatermass.

He's got a point: while Kneale's name is revered in certain circles, the screenwriter has never enjoyed the wider cultural cachet of a Dennis Potter or Jack Rosenthal. Fuelled by "a sense of injustice" about this, editor Neil Snowdon has marshalled an impressive line-up of writers and critics to create a literary monument worthy of the man he describes as "ground zero for the development of television drama". (If that sounds hyperbolic, let's not forget that the original Quatermass serial emptied pubs when it was shown in 1953.)

Given free rein to explore any aspect of Kneale's legacy, the writers have turned in an eclectic and absorbing collection of essays. Several, like Stephen Volk, writer of controversial BBC thriller Ghostwatch, talk of Kneale's influence on their own work, while others laser in on specific titles such as The Year Of The Sex Olympics, Kneale's '60s satire that anticipated the rise of reality TV with uncanny accuracy.

The book is punctuated with interviews from key players in Kneale's life, including his wife Judith Kerr, director Joe Dante who recommended him to John Carpenter as screenwriter for the ill-fated Halloween III - and a puppyishly keen Gatiss.

A 1980 fanzine interview with Kneale himself finds our hero in characteristically curmudgeonly mood: "First of all, don't count me as a science fiction writer," he huffs, adding, "I find all the worshipping and gossiping pretty silly."

He'd be mortified by this, then. But you won't be: a real labour of love, it's a fitting tribute to one of the most inventive writers of the 20th century. Consider the prophet honoured. Paul Kirkley

A limited hardback edition includes the script for The Big, Big Giggle, an unmade '60s teleplay about teenage suicides



# **LARRY COHEN: THE** STUFF OF GODS **AND MONSTERS**

Movie maverick's memories

# \*\*\*

RELEASED OUT NOW!

689 pages | Hardback/Paperback Author Michael Doyle Publisher BearManor Media

# Not many filmmakers

warrant a book-length Q&A, but "B-movie auteur" Larry Cohen is one of them.

As hefty as it is pricey, this draws on in-depth interviews with the writer/director of cult items like It's Alive and O: The Winged Serpent, carried out over the course of three years. Addressing each of his films in turn, it also details his childhood, his early work in TV, and aborted projects.

It's often fascinating. Cohen is a man with an interesting career, a good memory, and a well-stocked store of anecdotes. Frank opinions on the industry's egotists, idea thieves and clueless marketers sit alongside great anecdotes about his notorious guerrilla filmmaking tactics. He also sounds forth on how '60s show The Invaders (his brainchild) could have been better realised, and provides intriguing insights into personalities such as Alfred Hitchcock and composer Bernard Herrmann.

True, at nearly 700 pages (including copious, overlydetailed footnotes) it may prove a bit too much for all but Cohen's small army of loyal fans - but they will be in heaven. Ian Berriman

The aliens' giveaway rigid pinky in The Invaders was inspired by a characte with a missing fingertip in The 39 Steps



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# INVINCIBLE IRON MAN

# Bendis is in the armour now



RELEASED OUT NOW!

Publisher Marvel Comics Writer Brian Michael Bendis

Artist David Marquez

ISSUES 1-3 They're calling it

"All-New, All-Different", but Marvel's latest remix of their superhero universe isn't off to the most auspicious of starts. Thanks to significant delays, their new line of comic relaunches is giving us the eight-months-later aftermath of epic event series Secret Wars before its climactic issues have actually been published, and the new titles we've seen so far haven't quite lived up to the branding.

A case in point is their latest Iron Man ongoing title, which once again shows the problem Marvel have faced since Matt Fraction and Salvador Larroca

ended their acclaimed run on the comic in 2012. While the Marvel films have made billionaire superhero Tony Stark one of their most popular and well-known characters, recent Iron Man comics have often struggled to match the impact of Fraction and Larroca's approach.

Comics mastermind Brian Michael Bendis has been drafted in for the latest relaunch, and these first three issues are as slick and readable as you'd expect. However, while there's no shortage of fun, there's a sense of over-familiarity to Stark's exploits that's hard to ignore.

The story pitches us back into Tony's life at a point where he's almost succeeding in keeping the two sides of his identity in balance, but the reappearance of old enemy Madam Masque spells trouble.

Oi, stop looking

at the bulge!

She's somehow acquired lethal new powers, and is attempting to track down magical artefacts. Tony's mission to stop her gains some unexpected assistance from a rejuvenated and apparently reformed Doctor Doom...

Bendis has artistic backup here from his recent Ultimate Spider-Man collaborator David Marquez. who handles the visuals with style and delivers cinematic setpieces that pack a serious punch. These opening issues aim for splashy, engaging, blockbuster-style action, and they're helped by Bendis's skill with dialogue and pacing (most notably when Tony unwisely attempts to get Doctor Strange to high-five him).

# 66 For all the craft, there's a lack of genuine freshness 🤧

Unfortunately, for all the craft and polish on display, there's a lack of genuine freshness. Nothing here feels especially surprising (aside from Doom's unexpected appearance), while the heavy continuity references mean this isn't a good jumping-on point for new readers. Bendis adds a potentially interesting new love interest for Tony, but fails to capture the same charm and personality he brought to Ultimate Spider-Man. It's still sharp enough to be an entertaining read, and Bendis may later be able to improve the story's focus - but as a sign of where the Marvel Universe is heading, Invincible Iron Man isn't quite the triumphant success it needs to be. Saxon Bullock

A second Bendis Iron Man title, International Iron Man (drawn by his Daredevil pal Alex Maleev) launches in early 2016.



The Devil's Music

# \*\*\*\*

RELEASED OUT NOW!

Publisher Dark Horse Comics Writer Paul Cornell

Artist Tony Parker

# ISSUES 1-4 With the

psychedelic covers and invented discography, Paul Cornell and Tony Parker are having a hell of a lot of fun on this music-themed six-parter.

Exquisitely crafted, it centres on Motherfather, '70s rockers resembling a more outlandish Black Sabbath, whose deal with the devil turns out to be considerably more real than they expected. It takes the form of a mockumentary, with the camera crew exposing the artifice behind the exaggerated roles that the increasingly unstable bandmates play. While the quartet ingest all manner of mind-altering substances as they descend into madness, their much-maligned groupies and wives are poignantly cast as the moral heart of the story.

With its apocalyptic visions glanced in the bottom of teacups, Cornell's deft script channels Grant Morrison's occult-tinged work, but it's Tony Parker's excellently varied art that really impresses. It brings to mind Garry Leach and Alan Davis during the more realistically rendered, mundane sections, but he adopts a more fluid, cartoony style for the more fantastical moments. With a sequel ruled out, let's hope Cornell and Parker reunite soon. Stephen Jewell

Cornell's earliest memory is seeing a mural of a devil in the cellar of a squat where his brother lived (aged three).



In association with www.selfmadehero.com







# **STAR WARS:** CHEWRACCA

Wookiee gets comic bookiee



### RELEASED OUT NOW!

- Publisher Marvel Comics
- Writer Gerry Duggan
- Artist Phil Noto

#### ISSUES 1-3 Marvel's latest

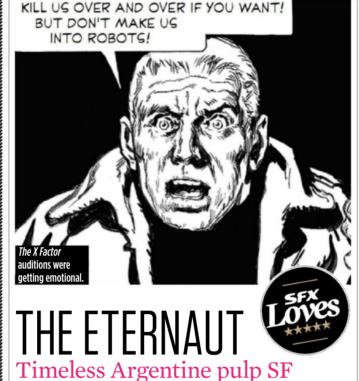
character-centric Star Wars miniseries has to tackle an interesting problem: a lead character who only communicates in growls. He may not be talkative, but Chewbacca makes for an engaging hero, and this new five-issue story delivers a fun standalone adventure for Han Solo's best buddy.

Shortly after the Battle of Yavin, Chewie has embarked on a secret mission, only to get stranded on Andelm-IV thanks to a malfunctioning spacecraft. All he wants is to fix his ship and leave, but fate brings him into contact with Zarro, a punky teen who's desperate to free her father from enslavement to a local gang lord.

These first three issues see Chewbacca solving problems via lots of roaring and punching, and writer Gerry Duggan spins a light but enjoyable tale with a healthy mix of action and humour. On the visual side. Phil Noto's art brings a lush, characterful feel to the story and also captures plenty of Chewie's personality. The plot is maybe a little too lightweight, but the end result is an enjoyable adventure romp firmly positioned on the "Space Western" side of Star Wars.

#### Saxon Bullock

Phil Noto started his career in 2D animation, and worked on Disney films such as The Lion King and Lilo & Stitch.



# RELEASED OUT NOW!

Publisher Fantagraphics

Writer Héctor Germán Oesterheld Artist Francisco Solano López

GRAPHIC NOVEL You may well not

have heard of The Eternaut, but in Latin America, this thing is basically Watchmen - the seminal comic whose iconography has taken on a life of its own. It's never been published in English before, but, characteristically, Fantagraphics have taken on the task of bringing its delights to a wider audience.

First serialised in Argentina between 1957 and 1959, The Eternaut is a work of vast scope that leaps across different SF genres. First, as the world falls victim to deadly radioactive snow,

66 This is very smart pulp SF with originality and heart 99

it's a Cold War-era postapocalypse story; a bleak, eerie section details the laborious steps taken by hero Juan Salvo and his family and friends to survive in a world suddenly turned hostile.

However, it gets steadily weirder, going on to encompass alien invasion and time travel. Playing against this, Francisco Solano López maintains a lucid art style that's neither stylised nor overly detailed. His monochrome line work generates real empathy for the characters caught in this surreal world. Meanwhile, writer Héctor Germán Oesterheld fills the story with satirical allusions and is constantly inventive, changing the status quo just as you feel you've got the measure of it.

The attitudes are a little dated (especially towards women), and the serialised nature means that. when read in large chunks, the plotting can be disjointed. But it's easy to see why the story endures - this is very smart pulp SF with originality and heart. It stands up today as both a period piece and strangely timeless. Eddie Robson

Writer Héctor Gerán Oesterheld was one of the thousands "disappeared" by Argentina's military junta in the late '70s



# **BATMAN & ROBIN ETERNAL**

Mother knows best

# \*\*\* RELEASED OUT NOW!

Publisher DC Comics

Writers Scott Snyder, James Tynion

IV. Tim Seeley, Steve Orlando Artists Tony Daniel, Paul Pelletier, Scott Eaton, Ronan Cliquet. Steve Pugh

# **ISSUES 1-6** For those who feel

there just aren't enough comics out there starring Batman, DC is happy to help with a sequel to their recent year-long weekly epic Batman Eternal. Here, the Caped Crusader's sidekicks get equal focus, and with this new saga only scheduled to run for 26 weeks, Batman & Robin Eternal feels like a far more streamlined experience.

Set in current Batman continuity, where Bruce Wayne has retired from crimefighting and an unexpected new Batman is prowling the streets, the story sees Dick Grayson and other Bat-characters coming under lethal attack, with a mysterious criminal called "Mother" manipulating events...

Featuring regular flashbacks, the story structure gives the first six issues an involving sense of tension and purpose, and the multiple writers are largely pulling off the actionheavy intrigue. Art-wise, the visuals range from pretty good to barely functional, and anyone not fully up to speed with DC continuity will be lost at sea but despite these flaws, Batman & Robin Eternal still looks to be one of DC's livelier weekly efforts. Saxon Bullock

It also features the first appearance in the "New 52" DCU of Cassandra Cain, the 1999-2006 incarnation of Batgirl.



# STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

# Shoot first



#### RELEASED OUT NOW!

- Reviewed on Xbox One
- Also on PC, PS4
- Publisher Electronic Arts

VIDEOGAME Endor. Red and green

blaster fire erupting, Rebel scum on stolen speeder bikes, AT-STs strutting. Overhead, Ewoks scurry through the canopy. The noise, the look, the feel - this is the most wonderfully accurate, brilliantly recreated Star Wars experience ever. It's a slavish recreation of the original trilogy (there's no sign of any prequel stuff here, at all), polished to an authentically late '70s-early '80s sheen. Every vehicle, character, blaster and planet is just-so, smartly created

to not only withstand thorough scrutiny from any dedicated Star Wars enthusiast, but also to work coherently within a well-balanced, AAA shooter. And this is an entertaining multiplayerfocused FPS, although not one that will satisfy the demands of hardcore players.

Shooting here is incredibly stripped-back and undemanding. You point, you shoot. That's entirely the point, though, because this is more a Star Wars simulator than a traditional first-person shooter. *Battlefront* is precision engineered to squeeze your nostalgia gland dry, sometimes to its detriment - the selection of blasters, for example, is hugely limited. There are 13 maps in the

game, split across Hoth, Endor, Tatooine and Sullust - all delightfully accurate, containing some neat Easter eggs. The real standouts are the massive play areas that host the 40 player modes like Walker Assault and Supremacy, because they offer up the "full Star Wars experience": vehicles, hero characters, multiple areas, and the grand scale that allows full-on aerial combat.

Sadly, hero and villain characters are one of Battlefront's few shortcomings. Swing a lightsaber as Luke and it never really feels like you're connecting with your enemies, leaving what should have been an empowering aspect of the game incredibly underwhelming. Try to do away with a hero character as a grunt and you'll find yourself on the wrong side of a serious battle of attrition.

But that's a very small thing. As a wonderful recreation of some of your most cherished childhood fantasies Star Wars Battlefront is an absolute triumph. Andy Hartup

Keep an eye out for some neat movie locations, like the Wampa lair on Hoth and





# THE HORUS **HERESY: BETRAYAL**

The Emperor's shilling

RELEASED OUT NOW!

2 players

Publisher Games Workshop

#### **BOARDGAME** Remember Space

Crusade from the early '90s? A generation was conscripted into Warhammer 40,000 courtesy of that recruiting sergeant masquerading as a boardgame. This new one aims to press gang the PS4 generation.

Set during the Imperium's civil war, two players each command a small force of Space Marines clashing in subterranean tunnels. The modular board, reference cards, miniatures plucked from Games Workshop's own model line and combat dice all hark back to that rainy Sunday afternoon staple of 25 years ago.

Play is quick, with turns passing from one player to the next with alacrity, and it's very accessible. The rules have been influenced by the likes of Games Workshop's own Space Hulk and more recent games such as Star Wars: Imperial Assault, rewarding tactical thinking while also enabling less experienced players to enjoy themselves too. The 38 models are brilliantly detailed and are the ideal nucleus for (or reinforcements to) a much larger force, should you wish to progress to the table top. Pricey, but a worthy spiritual successor to an iconic sci-fi boardgame.

#### Michael Abolins-Farrell

The game might include just 38 miniatures... But there are 172 individual parts from which to build them.

# Reviews



Auton audio action



#### RELEASED OUT NOW!

185 minutes | CD/Download

Publisher Big Finish

# AUDIO CD After ten years of

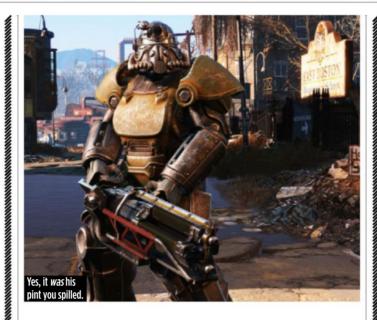
new Who, Big Finish have finally been given the go-ahead to produce audio dramas based in the post-2005 Doctor Who universe, and they've started with an engagingly pulpy spin-off extravaganza.

UNIT: Extinction is a four-episode adventure that focuses on UNIT's most recent incarnation, led by Kate Stewart (Jemma Redgrave) and Osgood (Ingrid Oliver), as a mysterious industrialist's plans lead to a new attempt at conquest by the Nestenes and their Auton pals.

It's a globe-trotting action romp that essentially plays as a cross between 1970 classic "Spearhead From Space" and an OTT movie blockbuster, delivering plenty of intrigue before the inevitable all-out battles between UNIT and the Autons. Ingrid Oliver is the standout in the cast, once again hugely charming as Osgood, and the fast pace keeps the story consistently entertaining.

The opening episodes are undeniably stronger and more atmospheric than the climax, and the tone also suffers thanks to some over-melodramatic villains. However, while UNIT: Extinction isn't quite inventive enough to be anything more than a throwaway adventure romp, it's still an enjoyable one that sets the stage for potentially interesting yarns to come. Saxon Bullock

Probably on sale by the time you read this: three-disc War Doctor set Only The Monstrous. Full review next issue!



# FALLOUT 4

# VATS entertainment



# RELEASED OUT NOW!

Reviewed on Xbox One

Also on PS4. PC

Publisher Bethesda Softworks

# **VIDEOGAME** You emerge from

Vault 111 into a radiation-ravaged Massachusetts. The people of the New England Commonwealth are a fearful bunch, and that fear is centred on The Institute, a secretive scientific organisation which has been working on robotics for generations and has now seemingly mastered the technology to produce synthetic androids which appear indistinguishable from humans. And since the "synth" influx has coincided with a raft of suspicious disappearances, a spring of mistrust has flooded the settlements of the Commonwealth. It's a rich premise that serves as the setup for philosophical pondering, Bethesda-standard warfare, and a slightly limp main questline.

But the heart of any Bethesda RPG lies in its world and its side-quests, and on this front, Fallout 4 delivers handsomely. Freed from the demands of longform storytelling, the game's

designers use secondary activities to tell engaging tales of the Commonwealth's irradiated eccentrics, and the results are often hilarious. And although Fallout 4 may not be the largest open-world game of its kind, it is exceptionally well judged in terms of how it distributes its content. It's also a very serviceable shooter.

There are rickety bits: some subpar character models, choppy framerates, wonky physics. There are a stack of glitches, too. In a sense, that's always been the bargain that players willfully enter into in return for a game of this scope: hundreds of hours of play in an enormous gameworld in exchange for a little understanding when pet mutt Dogmeat clips into the floor. But in terms of worldbuilding and tone, Bethesda has delivered another confident triumph. While Fallout 4 may not arouse the sheer sense of excitement and newness that greeted Bethesda's first take on the franchise, it's nevertheless a deftly refined continuation of the concept. James Nouch

VATS no longer stops time: it just slows it down. So don't hang around if you'd like to keep your face attached to your skull.



# **THUNDERBIRDS CO-OPERATIVE BOARD GAME**

No-strings-attached fun

# \*\*\*

RELEASED OUT NOW!

1-4 players

Publisher Modiphiüs Entertainment

# **BOARDGAME** This Thunderbirds

game pits four players against the twin perils of worldwide disasters and the devious antics of the Hood. It's a game of resource management, making sure personnel and equipment are in the right place at the right time, averting crises and earning the bonuses needed to foil the Hood. If his third scheme is thwarted, the team wins; but if your catalogue of disasters gets out of hand, the Hood emerges victorious "Mwahahaha!", etc.

The game is entertaining to play as a team, and rapidly ratchets up the tension, but featuring both dice rolls and the draw of cards, it can at times be random and unforgiving. Some characters are less fun to control, too especially John, who sits up in orbit in Thunderbird 5 and rarely gets in on the action. And there are occasions where you wait patiently for your turn only to find there's just not that much to do - maybe move to a new location or draw an FAB card

Still, Thunderbirds successfully delivers a different type of boardgame experience, so fans of the show or co-op gaming should definitely check it out. Steve Jarratt

Game designer Matt Leacock had never heard of Thunderbirds until he w approached by Modiphiüs's publisher.

COLLECTABLES



# COLLECTABLES

Will Santa bring any you of these in his sack?

Here's something appropriately festive! Well, if you're a goth that is... Funko's latest plush range continues with these ever so cute and cuddly The Nightmare **Before Christmas Mopeez** (FPI price £8.99 each; product codes D4227, D4229, D4233, D4234). From left to right we have: the villainous Oogie Boogie, a

yellow-eyed vampire teddy bear, the two-faced Mayor of Halloween Town (turn him round and the loon's grinning insanely!), and Jack Skellington's love interest Sally. Mopeez of Jack and his faithful ghost-dog Zero are also available. Each stands about 15cm tall... well, sits actually, on a bottom specially weighted to prevent them falling over.

Four new **Doctor Who 5.5** inch action figures here (FPI price £29.99 for the Curator/others £14.99; product codes D2878, D4411, D2874, D2875), and they're a mixed bunch. Best is the Curator, Tom Baker's enigmatic character from "The Day Of The Doctor"; well detailed, he comes with a walking stick and a (slightly rubbish)

lenticular "Gallifrey Falls" painting. Clara is good too, but Peter Capaldi's Twelfth Doctor, which comes in black or purple shirt variants, could be anyone! Do what we did by playing a game of "people this looks more like".

Lest you think these **Gremlins Re-Action** Figures (FPI price £8.99 each; product codes D1175, D1177, D1179) are suitable for children, the box makes it abundantly clear that they are an "ADULT COLLECTIBLE - NOT A TOY" - so hands off, kids! A fully poseable Billy Peltzer, Christmas Gizmo with keyboard and Gizmo with Barney the dog are pictured above, while Stripe and three



types of Gremlin are also available. Built to look like classic Kenner toys, they're charmingly retro but have trouble staying upright, so you might want to leave them in the box.

You're entering dangerous territory writing "What A Piece Of Junk" on the side of a piece of merch, but this Star Wars mug (FPI price £5.99; product code D2885) gets away with it because: a) said hunk of junk is the fastest in the galaxy and b) a picture of the Millennium Falcon improves pretty much anything it's slapped onto. A Princess Leia mug bearing an "I love you" slogan is also available - perfect for a quick cup of cocoa

before you go into deep freeze for several months.

It may look like a miniature Batarang - and looks lethal enough to sling at some crims in a Gotham alley - but the Batman Multi-Tool (FPI price £4.99: product code C7389) is intended for everyday household chores rather than the coldminded pursuit of justice. There's a bottle-opening function for those crafty Bat-brews, a crosshead screwdriver and a flathead screwdriver for urgent repairs to the Batmobile, plus a handy keychain to clip it to your utility belt. Note: may also be inserted into your nostrils as a hipster 'tache. Note: not recommended.

This Cyberman Attack **Toy** (£29.99; product code C6738) is great fun. Press the "start" button on the side of the horribly-lime-green blaster and he starts lumbering slowly forward, saying things like "Prepare for upgrading!" You've got 30 seconds to blast him with an infra-red beam. Shoot him in the face (!) three times and his left arm drops off – which is kinda hilarious. Three more and it gets increasingly Monty Python And The Holy Grail as the other arm goes. The gun doesn't have much of a range (2.5 metres), and you have to be pretty low to the ground for your hits to register. But then, that shouldn't be an issue for the ankle-biters this is aimed at.

# **THINGS** TO COME

More goodies on their way soon



#### **BATMAN V SUPERMAN BIG SIZE FIGURES**

Jakks Pacific are the people behind these jumbo action figures for next year's blockbuster, which will each stand about 51cm tall. There are four in the range: Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman and a Mech Suit Batman.



# FLOATING DELOREAN

This Back To The Future II collectable sends a 22cm-long replica of Doc's time machine floating about through the wonder of science - in the words of Jesse Pinkman. 'Yeah, bitch - magnets!" A floating hoverboard set is also on the way.



### STAN LEE FIGURE

Now you can have a Stan Lee cameo in your house! Standing 30cm tall, Hot Toys' handpainted sixth-scale Stan comes with four pairs of swappable hands, a director's chair and 30 points of articulation. . That's more than Stan himself has nowadays!





# HEROES REBORN

Ideas stillborn

- ▶ UK Broadcast **TBC**
- US Broadcast NBC, Thursdays
- Episodes Reviewed 1.01-1.09

### • Heroes Reborn should have

been a chance for redemption. It didn't need Hiro's time-travelling abilities to fix things. It didn't need a mysterious Haitian to wipe our memories of seasons two to four. It didn't need a fat cop to compel us to like it. It just needed to be good.

Because there is still a lot of goodwill for season one. A season that not only redefined how small-screen superheroes could be portrayed but which popularised the whole "multiple, parallel, criss-crossing, on-going storylines" format that dominates US TV drama these days. It was a phenomenon. It was revolutionary. And if Heroes Reborn had been anywhere near as good, we could have happily forgotten the intervening three seasons of meandering, directionless filler.

All Heroes Reborn needed to do was to try something new. To once again set new standards rather than jump on the bandwagon. Sadly all it brings to the table is 2007's leftovers, barely reheated. Actually, that's being generous. Heroes Reborn doesn't merely look like nothing has moved on in

fantasy TV in the past eight years; it actually feels like it hails from an even older era of TV, when plot was king and characters were mere slaves to it.

It's all so predictable. After Claire Bennet revealed the existence of "Evos" to the world at the end of season four, humans and heroes have been living in an uneasy co-existence until evil human big business types manipulate heroes-hate with what looks like a terrorist explosion at an Evo summit. Claire is killed – which may have been a great starting point mystery (she could recover from any injury, remember) if the

#### TRIVIA

→ Zachary Levi, who plays Luke Collins, was formerly married to Missy Peregrym, who played Candice Willmer in the first season of *Heroes*.

# DID YOU SPOT?

→ In "Game Over" Ren and Miko say "the master of space and time" can be found at 88 Hill Valley Drive two Back To The Future references in one address.

#### BEST MOMENT ▼

→ Future and present Noah Bennet having an argument with himself about the butterfly effect in "June 13: Part Two" (1.08).



# Viewscreen



series didn't make such a bad job of disguising the fact that Hayden Panettiere simply wasn't available for filming. Mix in mysterious twins raised apart (very Luke and Leia), game-playing Japanese geeks (Heroes apparently believes Japan is entirely populated by geeks), a heroes-killing Bonnie and Clyde, the Northern Lights and evil scientists, and you've got a compost heap of recycled plots. desperately hoping something rare and exotic might take root in it.

Nothing does. Mostly it's weeds. Even when, later in the season, the show becomes momentarily more interesting when Hiro is freed from a videogame and his time-travelling antics with Noah Bennet create an alternate universe, you swiftly realise this is just another riff on the season one story "Five Years Gone". Hey look, characters we know are acting differently. Nurture definitely beats nature in the Heroes universe as slight changes to the timeline can turn the good guys evil.

Familiar characters from the original series are, Noah aside, strictly rationed, and often given



short shrift - and in the case of psychic cop Matt Parkman, an unconvincing makeover. Hiro gets some decent screen time and a few good lines but not enough of either. Most of the new heroes are a forgettable bunch - no chance of any zeitgeist-troubling icons coming out of this show. Some of the effects are downright shoddy.

It's watchable, just. It's well acted. It's directed with bland efficiency (which is especially disappointing as a couple of the original show's best directors have returned - maybe it was shot in a rush?). But what's the point in rebooting a show if your ambitions for it don't even match the original at its most pedestrian? Dave Golder





# ROWENA

Ruth Connell's sassy **Supernatural** witch

**UK Broadcast E4, Wednesdays (season 10) US Broadcast The CW, Wednesdays (season 11)** 

**1** Last month, actress Ruth Connell posted a picture on Twitter which showed her being strangled by fellow actress Genevieve Padalecki. The reason for this sudden, violent assault? Jealousy. Connell, in the role of Rowena the witch, had just surpassed Padalecki's title of longest-running female character on Supernatural.

On that day, Connell's sharp-tongued alter ego, Rowena, had appeared in 13 episodes of the show compared to Ruby's mere 12. We have to say that this long run couldn't have happened to a finer character.

Since her debut in the third episode of season ten. Rowena has been an absolute blast: a cheeky, wisecracking, flirty witch-bitch so utterly wicked that the fact she's Crowley's mother seems only fitting (and the fact she calls her son, the King of Hell himself, "my wee sausage" only makes her even more wonderful). From

our very first glimpse of her - she'd just killed someone, naturally - Rowena has brought scene after scene to life with a vivacious charm topped off by the reddest hair on US telly and the best evelashes to boot. And did we mention she's wicked? As the wickedest of wicked witches, Rowena's just as happy to slaughter someone as she is to turn another witch into a hamster. Never let it be said she doesn't have a sense of humour.

But best of all is the sight of her wheedling and taunting Crowley, who can't quite figure out if he loves his mummy, wants her dead, or both. And while we're used to hearing Crowley's British accent, Rowena has injected welcome, pure Scottish sass into the series.

We can only hope now that Rowena gets to stay on the show forever... although, knowing Supernatural, she's probably already dead as you read this. Jayne Nelson





# JEKYLL AND HYDE

You'll probably prefer him when he's angry

- **UK Broadcast ITV, Sundays**
- US Broadcast TBC
- ▶ Episodes Reviewed 1.01-1.07

# Ever since 2005, ITV has been

trying to find a bona fide competitor to *Doctor Who*. Some (*Primeval*) came closer than others (*Demons*) but none has had the impact of the rejuvenated Time Lord. Until *Jekyll And Hyde*.

Whether or not it'll prove a similar ratings hit is yet to be seen, but it's certainly matched *Who* in terms of grabbing headlines. 459 complaints to Ofcom about the level of violence in a broadcast at 6.30pm. Result!

And it is extremely gory and violent in places, much more so than *Doctor Who*. So ITV's best family fantasy series in decades isn't *actually* family-friendly.

Which could give it an identity crisis if it does go to a second series. Should it tone down and risk losing, arguably, one of things that makes it such a refreshingly original show? Or should it give up pretending, go out later and lose some of its appealing innocence?

Ideally you wouldn't want it to change. Ideally you'd hope the audience tunes into this delightfully quirky show rather than it being forced to retool to chase an audience. Because if you do get J&H it's a thing of so, so many joys.

Although set in the 1930s – it centres on the grandson of the novella's Jekyll – with the cinema serial vibe that also inspired *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, the show also owes a whacking great debt to Lovecraft's Cthulhu, with beasts and monsters as nightmarish in

conception as they are brilliant in execution on screen. From henchmen with frogs in their eyes to steampunk Spring-Heeled Jacks, the show is full of extraordinary images.

The regular and recurring cast are a wonderfully colourful bunch, with even minor characters bursting with charm, and the women making the men - Hvde excepted - look like a right bunch of wets and tools. Admittedly, the villains are far more interesting than the heroes - Tom Bateman is much more fun as Hyde than Jekyll - and episodes light on either the evil Tenebrae or the dodgy MIO are disappointingly flat. But don't worry about that there's always a giant leech or lobster man coming along soon to liven things up. Dave Golder

# NEED TO KNOW

Series creator Charlie
Higson quite happily admits
that the scene in the pilot
with Hyde lifting a car was
based on a similar scene in
The Incredible Hulk pilot.

### TRIVIA

Tom Bateman based Hyde on Heath Ledger's Joker, and also listens to the music he thinks Hyde would listen to to help get into character.

# BEST MOMENT

→ The fight in "The Calyx": it's great watching Bella take on the bad guys while Hyde has his feet up, eating nuts and carrying on an unconnected conversation with her.

### DID YOU SPOT? ▼

→ In the "vampire" episode, there's a news headline blaming "Rumanians" for a spate of murders. Transylvania is in Romania.



# Viewscreen



The month's most quotable dialogue

"You know,
I'm over 2,000
years old. I'm old
enough to be
your messiah."

Doctor Who,
Episode 1.08





Gotham, Episode 2.07

# ASH

"You're kinda like a young me. Deadites ruined your life, and you're hot as hell."

> Ash Vs Evil Dead, Episode 1.02

### EASTMAN

"Can you step away from the goat? I'm still figuring out how to make cheese. Why don't you put the gun down and we'll talk, have some falafel..."

> The Walking Dead, Episode 6.04

### AGENT COULSON

"You can tell a lot about a woman from her books. Okay, I didn't actually know there were this many biographies of Margaret Thatcher..."

Agents Of SHIELD, Episode 3.06

# SCRIPTEASE

A TV season distilled

**SEASON 5** 

# LOST GIRL

She will live the life she chooses (...mostly)

**UK Broadcast Syfy, Tuesdays** 

Canada Broadcast Showcase, finished

Episodes Reviewed 5.01-5.16

#### BO

Okay, it's our final season. Who's the bad guy again?

HADES

I'm going to destroy the world!

# BO

Ah yes, Hades is my dad. Still, I have my BFF Kenzi, and so my life is awesome!

KENZI
I'm moving to Spain.

BO ...My life sucks.

To make herself feel better, BO has sex with TAMSIN.

TAMSIN

Bo is totally beautiful.

ZEUS

It's true, Bo's skin is flawless.

BO'S MUM (CAMEO)

My god, you're gorgeous!

EVERYBODY IN THE SHOW AT SOME POINT Bo is so pretty!

# THE AUDIENCE

We've watched five seasons of this. Alright, guys, we get it, Bo's fabulous. Can we move on now?

BO ...No, no, it's fine, do carry on.

HADES is released from Tartarus. He wants to bond with BO, but she's having none of it.

BO I don't care if you're Eric Roberts, you're a crappy dad!

HADES But I love you! I'm a good guy really.

BO
You left a weird
handprint on my
chest!

HADES
Tattoos are in! And look, I saved the life of Dyson's teenage son!

THE AUDIENCE Meh, nobody cares about him.

# LAUREN and BO get back together again.

BO & LAUREN
We're so blissfully
happy!

Five minutes later...

LAUREN

I can't do this, Bo, I'm leaving you.

THE AUDIENCE
We've watched five
seasons of this.
Alright, guys, we get
it, your love is
doomed. Can we

move on now?

HADES still hasn't done anything evil. TRICK hasn't done anything at all.

TRICK

I'm getting worried. When Hale was in the show and had nothing to do, he died.

HADES kills TRICK.

TRICK Called it!

HADES turns BO into an evil Dark Queen. She nearly kills everybody but has a flashback to all the snogging she's done over the last five years and turns good again. Then TAMSIN dies giving birth to HADES' baby daughter.

BO
I'm so sad Tamsin
is dead.

LAUREN Wanna get together?

> B0 Sure!

THE AUDIENCE Again? Bah, we're not

going to miss this.

TAMSIN'S BABY grows up and meets BO for the first time.

TAMSIN'S DAUGHTER You're so beautiful!

THE AUDIENCE
Oh, okay, we're going
to miss that.

ВО

...Not as much as I will.

Javne Nelson



# SPURIOUS A WARDS Celebrating the silliest and strangest moments from the month in TV



You know this girl is a wrong 'un on *American Horror Story*because SPOOKY LIGHTING.



BLOODIEST SHOW OF ALL TIME OF THE MONTH 

Ash Vs Evil Dead's Karo syrup and red food dye bill must
be astronomical.



Taking cover behind this clearly useless bit of metal wasn't Sarah and Laurel's smartest move in *Arrow*.



Green jumper, green lighting... anyone else think Gotham's

Ed Nygma may have an emerald-hued villain in his future?



HIPSTER HAT OF THE MONTH ©
Celery on the lapel, fair enough. But a celery headpiece?

iZombie has gone too far.



PATRIOTIC CARDIGAN OF THE MONTH •

Brian clearly loves his country on *Limitless*.



Pawnee newsreader Perd Hapley from *Parks And Recreation* has taken up residence in National City on *Superairl*.



Far from the weirdest thing to happen on Supernatural.

BOND FAN OF THE MONTH 
Is that why the Doctor's packing a Union Jack parachute?



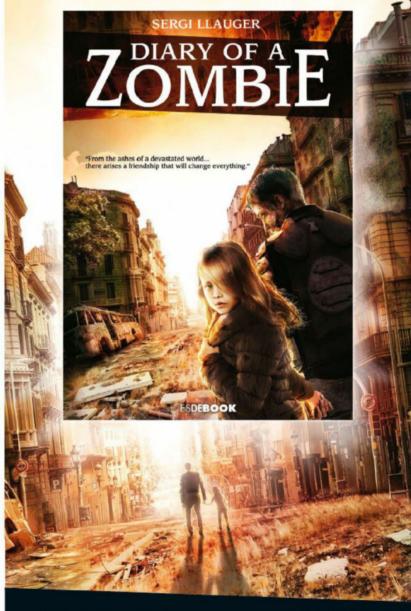


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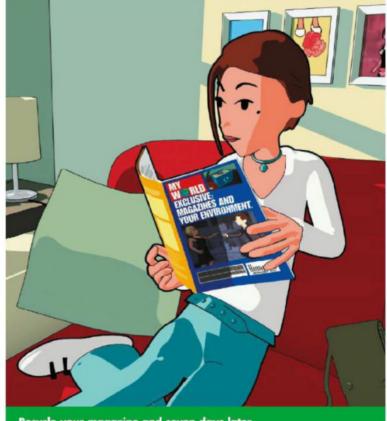
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# THE X-FILES

Celebrate Mulder and Scully's comeback with some truth-seeking teasers

**Quizmaster:** Nick Setchfield, Features Editor

# **OUESTION 1**

Mulder's quest for his missing sister was one of the show's enduring plotlines. What was her name?

### QUESTION 2 PICTURE QUESTION

Who's this duplicitous FBI agent and who played him?

### **OUESTION 3**

In what year was the alien colonisation scheduled to occur?

Which fictional brand of cigarettes does Cigarette Smoking Man

### **OUESTION 5**

What was Mulder's nickname at the academy?

What did Mulder say he would leave his Lone Gunman pal Frohike in his will?

### QUESTION 7 PICTURE QUESTION

In which episode did these words replace the tagline "The truth is out there"?

### **DUFSTION 8**

Which adult entertainment title did Mulder subscribe to?

### **DUFSTION 9**

Terminator 2's Robert Patrick joined the show in 2000 as a replacement for David Duchovny. What was the name of the FBI agent he played?

#### **DUFSTION 10**

Why do the numbers 11 21 recur in the show?

# How did you do?

or conspiracy theorist?









### **OUESTION 11**

Darren McGavin played Agent Arthur Dales. Which monsterchasing '70s show did he star in that was an acknowledged inspiration for The X-Files?

# PICTURE QUESTION

Which member of conspiracy freaks The Lone Gunmen is missing - and who played him?

#### **OUESTION 13**

Who or what was Queequeg?

### **OUESTION 14**

Which well-known cyberpunk pioneer co-wrote the X-Files episodes "Kill Switch" and

### "First Person Shooter"?

#### **OUESTION 15**

Which Hollywood star provided the voice of the demonic tattoo in "Never Again"?

# PICTURE QUESTION

Name the single Gillian Anderson released in 1997 with techno group Hal.

#### **OUESTION 17**

What significance do the words "No Regrets" have for Mulder?

Which year was the first X-Files movie released?

### **OUESTION 19**

What connects the X-Files episodes "Anasazi" and "Hollywood AD"?

### **OUESTION 20**

Which Bill Bixby-starring '70s show was Mulder watching the night that his sister was abducted?

neisigeM 94T 0 from series creator Chris Carter Carter's wife II Kolchak: The Vight Stalker I2 Langly Conter's The Vight Stalker I2 Langly - Dean Haglund I3 Scully's dog 14 William Gibson I5 Scully's dog 14 William Gibson Bi 1998 I9 They both feature cameos Bi 1998 I9 They both feature cameos from series creator Chris Carter Flask" 8 Celebrity Skin 9 John Doggett 10 It's the birthday of Chris 1 Samantha 2 Alex Krycek - Nicholas Lea 3 2012 4 Morley 5 Spooky 6 His VHS collection 7 "The Erlenmeyer Answers

Monster-of-the-week











# Total Recall Personal recollections of cherished sci-fi



# **ULYSSES 31**

# f there was a spike in applications for Classical Studies

courses in the late '80s, it's probably down to Ulysses 31. First aired in 1981-1982 and shown on Children's BBC four years later, this French/Japanese co-production transplanted the legends of Odysseus to the 31st century: so, for example, the Cyclops became a giant robot, and three-headed hell-dog Cerberus a heat-detecting "interceptor satellite". After Ulysses think Bee Gee Barry Gibb, but with a cape and lightsaber-like laser sword – saves his son from sacrifice by destroying the Cyclops, the gods punish him by sending him into "the strange cosmos of Olympus", in search of the Kingdom of Hades. For me and no doubt many others, the show kick-started an interest in classical mythology in much the way that Ray Harryhausen's movies did for an earlier generation.

It still looks fantastic today. In particular, I love the design of Ulysses' spaceship, the Odyssey, which doesn't seem to have a room that's less than 40 feet high - it even contains fields with cows! That titanic sense of scale is characteristic of the many planets visited over its 26 instalments.

It's a long, strange trip, with some psychedelic sights: flying unicorns, Lovecraftian monsters, a swarm of giant space moths. And it has its

spooky moments, too: in the last episode, Ulysses finally reaches Hades, whose inhabitants - black-eyed revenants who float about backwards, causing anything they touch to disintegrate seriously creeped me out.

Then there's the groovy prog-rock score, with its flutes and wah-wah guitar. Three decades on, a doomy death-march cue called "La Malédiction Des Dieux" still bubbles up from my subconscious every so often, compelling me to hum it for the rest of the day.

There's just one fly in the ointment... In the aftermath of Star Wars, every sci-fi series had to have a cute robot. Ulysses 31's is Nono, a bolt-guzzling scaredy-cat who spends most of his time gawping open-mouthed in a manner which may have inspired Caitlin Moran's photograph face, or spitting out cheesy catchphrases worthy of a Crackerjack presenter ("Mumbling moons!"). However, with judicious use of the fast-forward button he's easily erased. If you've never seen the show, I urge you to hunt down the DVDs. You're bound to enjoy it unless you're horribly Homer-phobic... •

Ian Berriman is fighting all the evil forces, bringing peace and justice to all.

### Fact Attack!

The never-aired pilot of Ulysses 31 featured radically different designs - Ulysses spaceship the Odyssey looks like a green ring.

The Mysterious Cities Of Gold was a co-production of the same French and Japanese companies, and featured many of the same voice cast.

Howard Ryshpan (Nono) also played Dr Keloid in David Cronenberg's Rabid - a crazy surgeon who cuts a nurse's finger off with scissors!

> Theme tune composer Shuki Levy's other credits include MASK, Inspector Gadget and He-Man And The Masters Of The Universe



